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A full-page photograph of actor Nick Kroll. He is wearing a dark red suit, a mustard yellow turtleneck, and brown-rimmed glasses. He is leaning against the front of a dark classic car, with his right leg crossed over his left. He is giving a thumbs-up with his right hand. A large white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the number 20.

20

Nick Kroll



PHOTOGRAPHY BY **PETER YANG**

No one creates
more bizarre characters. Now the real
Nick Kroll explains
how he does it

BY ERIC SPITZNAGEL

Q1: *On Comedy Central's Kroll Show you've created a vast universe of characters, including Fabrice Fabrice, Bobby Bottleservice and Aspen Bruckheimer. Do they just pop magically into your brain, or is it an arduous process involving math equations and dry-erase boards?* It's a combination of things. Usually a voice will pop into my head. Sometimes I'll start playing around with it in the writers' room, doing the voice and seeing if it lands. When I lived in New York I got a lot of inspiration on the subway. It was great for research. It's tough in L.A. because it's a solitary existence. You end up having to do a lot of research on YouTube.

Q2: *Which of your characters are you most likely to slip into during sex?* I developed Bobby Bottleservice by talking to girls—my friends mostly—and pretending to hit on them. Their responses were a combination of “Ugh” and “Oh, that’s funny, because that’s the kind of douchebag who hits on me all the time.” But there was also a weird part of them that liked it—that liked a guy who’s passionate

and loves women, even though he’s, you know, kind of a juice monster. [laughs] Bobby, in the right context, isn’t a bad one to channel. He’s young and wild and full of life and passion. You could do worse.

Q3: *Making people laugh is part of your job. Do you lose your sense of humor when you're not at work?* Sometimes I have trouble watching comedy on TV or whatever, because I’m so accustomed to looking at the mathematics of how comedy works. I think if you talk to a lot of comedians, if you ask them what shows they watch, most of them will tell you they can watch only dramas. It’s just not relaxing to watch a comedy. It’s relaxing to watch a football game or House of Cards. You need that release.

Q4: *What's your release? Is there a certain genre of entertainment that lets you unwind?* Honestly, my release is flipping through channels. At the moment I’m binge-watching The Wire. [laughs] That’s right, I’m on the cultural forefront—from 10 years ago. I also like watching football. I like playoff sports, generally. I like it when there are real stakes. I’m not interested in watching a midseason baseball game, but I’ll watch just about any playoff game in just about any sport.

Q5: *You're on an FX show called The League, about a bunch of friends in a fantasy football league. Prior to joining the show, had you ever been involved in a fantasy sport?* Not at all. But the entire cast of The League is in a fantasy league together, which is kind of awesome.

I’m not having the best season thus far, but historically I’m one of the top guys in our league. I’m a tinkerer, a drunk tinkerer. I’ll come home late at night and fuss with the lineup. On the show we call it “tinker stinker time,” which is the morning bathroom time on Sunday before a game—you know, your morning dump—your last opportunity to tinker with your lineup and really make it happen. I’m a master of the tinker stinker.

Q6: *A few years ago Ken Marino, who was guest starring on The League, allegedly got arrested after punching you on the set. "I had my reasons," he tweeted. Let's assume for a moment it actually happened and wasn't a big joke. What's your side of the story?* Ken Marino is a bully. [laughs] No, actually, I’m fascinated that people took any of that seriously. What happened was, Ken came into the trailer and was like, “Hey, I just tweeted that I punched you.” And I responded by tweeting a Martin Luther King Jr. quote—something like, “I have decided to stick with love.” And people thought the whole thing was real. I couldn’t believe it. It was so bizarre to me. Then people were mad when they found out it was just a joke, because I guess they felt lied to or something. It was the weirdest thing I’ve ever been involved in.

Q7: *We should also discuss the Bono incident. After the U2 frontman kissed your girlfriend, Amy Poehler, at the 2014 Golden Globe Awards, you tweeted later, "Hey, Bono, watch your back." Is there still bad blood between you guys?* I am conflict averse, but I have my limits. My thing with Bono isn’t just about what happened at the Globes. We have a long-standing conflict. It goes way, way into the past. It’s just.... [sighs deeply] This is still really painful to talk about. I was supposed to be the Edge, but Bono fired me because I don’t know how to play guitar. Just like that—boom!—I’m out of U2. I have not forgiven Bono since.

Q8: *Does it upset you when you and Amy go to Mexico and the tabloids publish your vacation photos, but all they talk about is her bikini and don't once mention your beach body?* It’s a total bummer. It’s a bummer that anyone would want to see a picture of me on vacation. Like, where are we as a society that it’s considered news that I went on vacation? Doesn’t the world have bigger issues to deal with than looking at photos of me in short-shorts and a weird camo hat?

Q9: *You once bragged that your career has*

been “about as easy a ride as you could have.” What’s your secret? I think it helps that I grew up financially comfortable. A lot of artists throughout history came from the leisure class. They had the time to ponder things, to think about things. They didn’t have to spend every waking moment worrying about where rent was coming from or finding a shitty job they didn’t want because they needed the money to survive. Many, many artists grew up with nothing and had something deep inside that they wanted to express. But it makes a big difference if you don’t have those financial burdens and can decide, without worrying about bills, if you want to tell dick jokes professionally

Q10: *Were you a funny kid?* I thought I was, but I don’t think my family would agree. When I was a kid, if you’d asked them, “Do you think Nick could be a professional comedian or actor?” I’m pretty sure they would have said, “He’s a sweet kid, but let’s be honest.. .” When I decided I was going into comedy, I would describe their reaction as skeptically supportive.

Q11: *Were you telling original jokes or just imitating what you saw on TV?* Me and my friend Andrew Goldberg—who now writes for Family Guy—were best buddies in elementary school, and we’d re-create “Wayne’s World” sketches. I think a lot of comedians start out that way, just reenacting their favorite Saturday Night Live bits or their favorite scenes from Trading Places or whatever. But to me as a kid, it never felt like it was leading somewhere. I never thought, I’m going to be a comedian when I grow up. I never thought too far into the future. I guess that goes back to growing up comfortably—I had that leisure to relax and not think about what I was going to do with my life or how I was going to do it.

Q12: *Your first time on a big stage was as a freshman in college, during a stand up competition. You lost. What happened?* I had never done comedy before, but I had this idea that I would get on stage and say, “God, I thought I was going to be so nervous, but I’m actually totally relaxed,” and then pee my pants. I’d have a water balloon in my pants and pop it with a pin during my set, and it would look like I’d peed myself. But I forgot to bring the water balloon, so I grabbed a sandwich bag or something and filled it with water. But it didn’t work out like I’d hoped. When I tried to jab it, it didn’t burst, and I kept trying, which ended up looking like I was furiously masturbating on stage. And then I spent the next five or 10 minutes explaining what I’d

tried to do unsuccessfully. It did not go well.

Q13: *Your father was a private investigator. Was that as cool as it sounds?* From a very early age I would say, “My dad is a private investigator, but he doesn’t carry a gun and he doesn’t wear a trench coat.” He was working on a corporate level. I guess some of it was a little dangerous. The Kuwaiti government hired him to find Saddam Hussein’s money, and the Filipino government hired him to find Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos’s money. During the Hussein thing we had a cop outside our house for a while, and I guess that was cool. It felt more cool than scary.

Q14: *You never wanted to follow in your dad’s footsteps?* Not really. Obviously I went into a different field, but I learned a lot from him, especially the way he treats people. Anyone from heads of state to kids I played with in Little League baseball, he was kind to all of them. He treated everybody the same. You can go a long way in this world by just being a decent person.

Q15: *You went to school on a farm in Vermont. That sounds almost ridiculously idyllic. Were you milking cows more than reading books?* Well, if you want to get specific, there were no dairy cows. They were beef cows, so I didn’t have a lot of contact with them. You don’t befriend animals that are heading to slaughter. Otherwise it was an amazing experience. It’s this place called the Mountain School in Vermont, and that’s really where I got my first bug for performing. It was a bunch of smart, individualistic kids who were okay being weird. In high school it can be scary to be weird. But going up there and meeting all these eccentric kids, I was like, Oh, it’s okay to dress up in an orange jumpsuit and lip-synch James Brown songs while wearing kitchen clogs. It was a watershed for me. I was given permission to be a weirdo.

” I have trouble watching comedy on TV. It’s just not relaxing.”

Q16: *One of your first big TV roles was on the 2007 ABC sitcom Cavemen, based on a Geico commercial. At the time, you were probably just happy to be working. In hindsight, do you wish you could expunge it from your permanent record?* I still think back on it fondly. I'd never had a TV show before. Just being able to act for a living was such an amazing opportunity, even though I was hidden under about a foot of silicone makeup. It took four hours every morning to get the makeup on and an hour to get it off. If I got that job today, I'd be like, "Holy shit. Are you kidding me with this?" But because I didn't have anything to reference it against, I was like, Oh, great, I guess this is what being on a TV show is like. You're covered in silicone with hair glued to your body.

Q17: *Have you ever met a comedy idol who turned out to be a jackass?* That almost never happens. Usually it's just about me being star struck. I had a small thing with Chevy Chase when I was on Community. He wasn't a huge fan of anyone besides him getting a laugh. But even then I was like, Oh shit, I'm threatening to Fletch? That's not too bad. Sometimes it doesn't matter if the people you love and respect aren't as cool as you want them to be. Whether Chevy Chase and I are best friends is irrelevant, and it pales in comparison to how he inspired me in Fletch or those Vacation movies or on SNL. I don't need him to like me.

Q18: *What's your 10-year plan? Are you fine with being a comic until the bitter end, or do you want to make the leap to drama?* I'd love to be able to do more dramatic stuff. There's so much good drama happening on TV right now, like True Detective, which I think is just amazing. I've got such a dark, dark side that I haven't been able to show yet. But I don't know, maybe it wouldn't be worth it. Doing a show like True Detective might be too much of a bummer. Dealing with dead people every day? That's a tough one.

Q19: *Do comedians have groupies?* Sure. I'm pretty sure that's the whole reason anybody becomes an artist. Whether it's music or comedy or filmmaking, it's all done in the hope that random strangers will want to sleep with you. When I got to the point in my career that women might actually have wanted to sleep with me because of whatever fame they thought I had, I wasn't interested anymore. I was like, Do I actually want to be with somebody who's just into me because I'm on television? But the biggest reason to say no to a groupie is that you've done two shows and are exhausted and want to go back to the hotel and sleep because you're leaving early in the morning.

Q20: *When you do stand-up, are you annoyed if people in the audience yell out requests?* I just let them get it out of their system. I'm like, "Everybody, let's all scream things that we want and think we like. Let it all out. Let the poison out." I let them have that moment, and then they tend to settle down. If that doesn't work, there's a thing I learned from Aziz Ansari, who I think learned it from Louis C.K. Once you finish your set, you come out for an encore and it's all about answering questions or taking requests. Some people really want to hear certain jokes. They want to hear it live like they heard it on an album or a special or a TV show.







ELEGANT

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How did you get started in the modeling industry? I got into modeling around 2018 when I lost a lot of weight and got back in shape. I started doing TFP shoots just for fun and to boost my confidence, but that quickly led to paid work. From there I was published in numerous magazines and publications. Last year I joined an agency based in LA, which has led to even bigger opportunities, including walking in New York Fashion Week this past September.

Can you tell us about your first modeling gig? My first paid modeling gig was for a subscription-based lingerie company. The subscription also included a monthly magazine publication, and I would shoot in one of their lingerie sets every month. Unfortunately, the company has since gone out of business, but I thought it was the coolest thing ever to be featured in the catalog each month it really inspired me to continue my journey with modeling.

What is the most exciting project you've worked on so far? I've been blessed to work on so many unique projects ranging from fashion shows to magazine publications to dancing in multiple music videos and onstage with artists! I've also had the opportunity to shoot with countless talented photographers, however, I am absolutely thrilled and most honored to be featured in Playboy! Playboy is such an iconic magazine that has celebrated the beauty, confidence, and individuality in women for decades. Being a part of such a renowned publication is truly a dream come true, and I am excited to share my story with a global audience.

What's your secret to staying in great shape and maintaining a healthy lifestyle? I am a competitive ballroom dancer, and I train in dance four or five days each week. In addition to my dance training, I teach Zumba and yoga several times each week, walk or jog daily, and try to incorporate three or four strength workouts every week as well. I also track my macros and try to hit my protein and calorie goals each day, though I do believe in balance and try to eat clean at least 80% of the time. I'm a lot more strict with macros when I have a big shoot or event coming up.

What advice do you have for aspiring models trying to break into the industry? There's never going to be a "perfect time", so just get started now. Book your first shoot today, try to book TFP opportunities so you don't have to spend a ton of money when first building up your portfolio. The first shoots you do, you may not end up with anything portfolio-worthy, however, really look at the photos after each shoot and try to learn something. Look at your expressions and the angles you make with your body. Study other models in publications or on the runway, try out what they're doing, and learn what's most flattering on you. Before every shoot, I like to play the style of music that will put me in the right mood for whatever look I'm trying to create, whether it's a sexy seductive lingerie shoot or a powerful high-fashion look I'm going for.

Are there any models or fashion icons who inspire you? Coco Rocha is my ultimate fashion icon. I am captivated by her unparalleled style and confidence. Watching her effortlessly command the runway with her unique and inventive poses is truly inspiring, and showcases a level of creativity and confidence that sets her apart in the fashion world. I also admire how she's using her mastery of posing to create a digital brand online and through her modeling camps.

How do you stay up-to-date with the latest fashion trends and industry developments? I stay on top of trends by following Instagram or TikTok as my go-to platforms for style inspiration. I follow a lot of fashion influencers, designers, and brands that keep me savvy on industry trends, although 90% of the time, you can find me around town in activewear as I'm usually running straight from work to dance to the gym, etc.

Do you have a dream project or campaign you'd love to be a part of one day? I have several publications and brands I'm currently manifesting collaborations with! So far in 2024, I have NY Fashion Week, Paris Fashion Week and Miami Swim Week confirmed. I'm also staying open to whatever additional opportunities the universe would like to send my way.

How do you balance your professional career with your personal life and relationships? I am an extremely busy girl - In addition to modeling, I have a full-time career as an HR Director, I train in dance four or five days each week, and I'm a single mom! I think the key to balance is staying present in the moment, and knowing every single day what your priorities are and where your focus needs to be. Whether I'm at a photo shoot, getting ready for a dance competition, or at my daughter's ice skating practice, I try my best to stay in the moment so I show up as my best self in whatever I'm doing.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned in your career as a model? Mindset is everything. If you're not feeling your most confident self at a shoot, figure out how to show up that way or fake it, because otherwise, your insecurity is going to show in the pictures. There are certain things I know I need to do personally on a daily basis in order to show up confidently including meditation, affirmations, journaling, getting adequate sleep, regular workouts, eating nutritious meals, etc. If I'm not feeling like my best self physically, it's hard to show up confidently in any area of life really.

Can you share some of your favorite beauty and fashion tips? I try to do some kind of self-care or beauty practice daily in the evenings, whether it's a long "everything shower" where I exfoliate, shave everything, deep condition my hair, etc., give myself a manicure/pedicure, whiten my teeth, apply lotion or self-tanner all over, etc. It's nice to spend 20 or 30 minutes each day winding down and pampering yourself and it gives you a "luxurious" or "I'm worth it" mindset before bed each day.





How do you handle the pressure of constantly being in the spotlight? In all honesty, the only pressure I feel is from myself; I am definitely my own worst critic. I have a lot of goals for myself and I am hyper-aware of how quickly time goes, so I put a lot of pressure on myself to achieve things quickly. When I stress myself out, I think of my past self and how proud that version of me would be of who I've become and what I've been able to achieve so far.

What are your go-to fashion staples or must-have items in your wardrobe? I dress super casual on a day-to-day basis, but I have a fetish for sexy shoes and a high-quality handbag. My favorite bag is my Louis Vuitton purse I got during NYFW last year, and my favorite shoes are a classic pair of Louboutins that I only wear to photoshoots or in the bedroom.

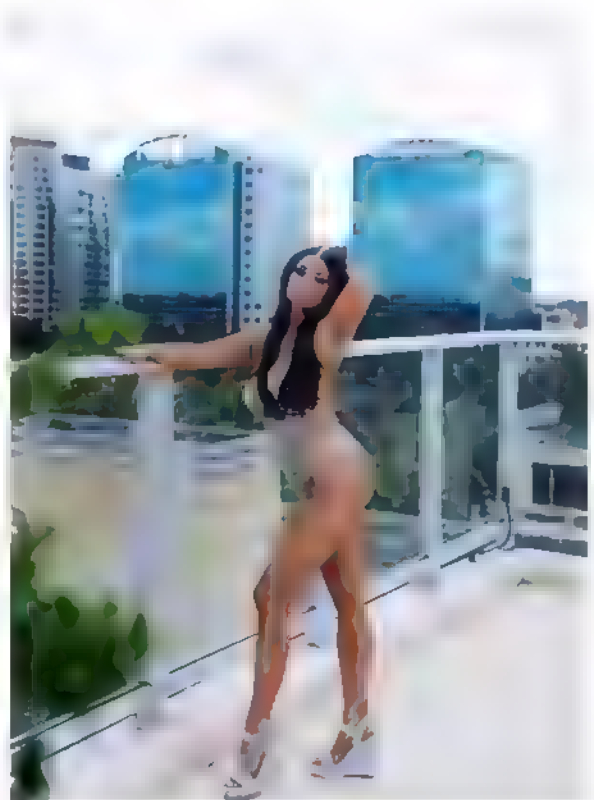
What role has social media played in your modeling career, and how do you engage with your followers? I owe my entire modeling career to social media; it's where I've gotten almost every big opportunity so far to date! I've grown my following on social media simply by showing up daily as my most authentic self. I don't try to curate a fake image or personality. I've always just shared what I'm working on behind the scenes and whatever random thoughts I might be having that day. Most of the time I share openly without a second thought, I think it's the Aries in me, but my followers seem to enjoy it. I try to answer as many comments and

messages as I can, especially if someone takes time out of their day to say something positive or show support.

What are your long-term goals and aspirations in the modeling industry? I'm going to stay active in modeling and dance as long as it's still fun for me! So far 2024 is full of big photoshoot opportunities, several brand deals, a destination photoshoot, NYFW, and Paris Fashion Week! I also have numerous national and international dance competitions planned, so right now I'm just super excited and grateful for all the opportunities unfolding and coming my way.

Can you share some upcoming projects or ventures that your fans can look forward to? In 2024 I am super excited to be walking again in NYFW, Paris Fashion Week, and Miami Swim Week! I'm also super excited to be competing in dance competitions in Cuba, Puerto Rico, USDC in Orlando, and Backpool in London, as well as numerous other competitions across the US! I have a big fashion campaign with a brand I can't disclose just yet, as well as a few other publications in the works! I'll also be launching my own activewear and swim line.

Thanks so much for your time, Where can our readers follow you on social media to stay updated on what you're up to? I'm most active on Instagram, feel free to follow my personal account at @amyrenee088 or my agency account @ariareneeexo. Thank you for all your love and support.



Playboy Interview

Spike Lee

A candid conversation with the outspoken actor-director about being black in America, sounding white on the streets and causing trouble everywhere else

BY ELVIS MITCHELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RANDY O'ROURKE

There are many logical places you might find a famous director, writer, producer or actor—in a bungalow office on the studio back lot, poolside in Bel Air or maybe at a prominent table at Le Dome. But if you're looking for the most successful hyphenate in movies—a man who is the writer, producer, director and star of a series of commercially and critically successful films—forget Hollywood and head for a renovated three-story firehouse in the Fort Greene section

of Brooklyn.

The fact that Spike Lee has chosen to oversee his burgeoning show-business empire from Fort Greene, his childhood home, is simply one example of his fierce independence. He demands complete control over his often controversial movies, such as *Do the Right Thing*, *School Daze*, *She's Gotta Have It*, *Mo' Better Blues* and the upcoming *Jungle Fever*. He directs and stars in a string of Nike commercials

with Michael Jordan. He directs music videos. He oversees books and documentaries about himself and his films. He's starting a record company. He owns a store—Spike's Joint—that merchandises every conceivable type of paraphernalia based on his movies.

"Spike is first and foremost a damn good businessman," says actor-director Ossie Davis, who played Da Mayor in *Do the Right Thing* and Coach Odom in *School Daze*. But Lee is



much more than that. With his movies, he has clearly raised the consciousness of Hollywood toward black filmmakers and, more importantly, he has shown that black-themed films can be both commercially and critically viable. But Lee is not satisfied with putting blacks on the screen; he is a vocal advocate for getting blacks jobs behind the scenes as well. He stipulates in his contracts—whether for movies or commercials—that blacks be hired, often in capacities that have not been available to them previously. He insists, for instance, that black artists do the posters for his movies and he has built a loyal repertory company of actors and crew, some of whom have been with him since his days as a student filmmaker.

Probably no movie director since Hitchcock has become so immediately identifiable to the public. Part of that fame stems from Lee's acting, both in his films and in commercials. But Lee, 34, has also positioned himself as a spokesman on a variety of racial issues. *Vogue* dubbed him a "provocateur," and he seems dedicated to living up to that image.

Shelton Jackson Lee—who was nicknamed Spike by his mother—is the eldest child of a middle-class Brooklyn family. His mother, who died in 1977, was a teacher who demanded educational excellence from all five Lee children; his father is a musician who has written the scores for most of his son's films. Lee was the third generation of his family to attend Morehouse College, the so-called black Harvard, and later went to New York University when he decided to pursue filmmaking. His Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop, We Cut Heads won a student Academy Award and became the first student film ever shown at Lincoln Center's "New Directors, New Films" series.

Despite that success, he was unable to land serious film work. Since Hollywood wasn't helping him, Lee decided to help himself. Armed with spit, prayers and a budget of \$175,000, he made *She's Gotta Have It*, a dizzying, up-to-the-minute look at a relationship through the eyes of an independent and charismatic young black woman and her three suitors. Lee himself played one of those suitors—Mars Blackmon, the fly-mouthed messenger who does everything, including make love, in a pair of Air Jordans that seem to be as large as he is. (Mars lives on in Lee's Nike commercials.) The movie made \$8 million and turned Lee into an overnight sensation.

Had Spike's first film been a fluke? Was it a lucky break or was he really a filmmaker?

Lee answered that with *School Daze*, an ambitious, multilayered tale about life at a black college. Not only did he attempt to examine such sensitive issues as the stratification of light- and dark-skinned blacks and the cliquish assimilation into the middle class that takes place at black colleges, he did it as a musical comedy. *School Daze* was one of Columbia Pictures's biggest-grossing films of 1988.

It was in 1989 that Lee tackled his most heated subject—race relations on the hottest day of the year on a tense Bedford-Stuyvesant block in *Do the Right Thing*. From the flamboyant opening to the tragic climax that ends in one character's death at the hands of the police to the double-barreled closing quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, *Do the Right Thing* was proudly combative. When it failed to earn a chance at an Oscar for Best Picture, Lee was publicly outraged, claiming the snub was racially motivated. Lee changed pace with *Mo' Better Blues*, a movie about a single-minded jazz musician, but he continued to be a controversy magnet—he was branded as anti-Semitic because of the movie's portrayal of two avaricious, small-minded Jewish club owners. Since his newest movie, *Jungle Fever*, a story about interracial love, promises to be one of his most controversial, we decided the time was right to send Elvis Mitchell, a freelancer and National Public Radio's Weekend Edition entertainment critic, to check

in with Lee. Mitchell reports:

"Lee has made my life miserable for the past couple of months. The line 'Elvis was a hero to most, but he never meant shit to me' comes from 'Fight the Power,' the bracing and hard-charging theme of *Do the Right Thing*, and invariably, in phone-tag intramurals preceding our meetings, every message Lee left on my answering machine began with those deathless words, followed by his trademark cackle.

"I first met with him in his office in Fort Greene, where he was putting together an assemblage of *Jungle Fever* to show the studio before leaping into his next picture, an epic on the life and times of Malcolm X. The place is cluttered with boxes and people and Lee was extremely busy. We did manage to talk briefly and schedule our first session, which was to take place on a flight from New York to Los Angeles. He was good-humored and prickly, he loves to catch people off guard and make incendiary comments. For instance, he demanded the right to approve this interview before it was published, but when I told him no, he simply cackled.

"Our first lengthy session, squeezed in between drops during a bumpy flight and a showing of *Dick Tracy*, demonstrated that Lee was a man of many moods. He preferred judging questions to answering them and seemed more combative than comfortable. But our second session, which took place at his New York apartment a few blocks from his office, was far more relaxed and productive. He responded to the questions with candor and enthusiasm and even posed some of his own. He asserted his shyness and spoke about his difficulty with interviews, even as he talked at length.

"We started with the obvious question,"

PLAYBOY: You like to cause trouble, don't you?

LEE: Sure. I was an instigator as a kid. I just like to make people think, stir 'em up. What's wrong with that?

PLAYBOY: *Jungle Fever* certainly seems likely to stir things up.

LEE: [Laughs] You think that one's gonna cause some trouble?

PLAYBOY: When you write lines such as "You never see black men with fine white women"? What was the word in the script—mugly? Wasn't that the way you

described the white women black men go out with?

LEE: [Laughs] But that's true. I've never seen black men with fine white women. They be ugly. Mugly, dogs. And you always see white men with good-looking black women. But, hey, every time you see an interracial couple somewhere, people stare at 'em.

PLAYBOY: Come on, Spike. That's a big generalization. We've seen good-looking interracial couples.

LEE: I said what I meant to. Never see it.

PLAYBOY: We know you've said in the past that you won't get involved with white women.

LEE: I don't need the trouble. Like I don't have enough as it is. Black women don't go for that, don't like that shit. I just don't find white women attractive, that's all. And it's way too many fine black women out there.

PLAYBOY: Isn't there an interracial marriage in your family?

LEE: Yes. My father. My father remarried. He married a white woman.

PLAYBOY: Did that have any effect on your making *Jungle Fever*?

LEE: Why? Why would it? I didn't talk to my father about it. I talk to my father only when it comes to scoring my movies. This isn't about him.

PLAYBOY: There's another potential controversy in *Jungle Fever*. In the opening, you address the audience directly, not as a character, and tell them that if they think you're a racist, they can kiss your "black ass." You say it twice. Why?

"Black people can't be racist. Black people don't have the power to keep people from getting jobs or the vote."

LEE: I felt it was justified. I wanted to hit all that, about race, before anybody else.

PLAYBOY: How did test audiences respond to it?

LEE: The test audiences liked it, I don't think Universal is crazy about that shit.

PLAYBOY: Will it stay in the movie?

LEE: I guess it will. I do have final cut.

PLAYBOY: Why does so much of *Jungle Fever* emphasize racial anger?

LEE: Why shouldn't it? It's out there.

PLAYBOY: You've said that black people are incapable of racism. Do you really believe that?

LEE: Yeah, I do. Let me clear that up, 'cause people are always taking stuff out of context. Black people can't be racist. Racism is an institution. Black people don't have the power to keep hundreds of people from getting jobs or the vote. Black people didn't bring nobody else over in boats. They had to add shit to the Constitution so we could get the vote. Affirmative action is about finished in this country now. It's through. And black people had nothing to do with that, those kinds of decisions. So how can black people be racist when that's the standard? Now, black people can be prejudiced. Shit, everybody's prejudiced about something. I don't think there will ever be an end to prejudice. But racism, that's a different thing entirely.

PLAYBOY: You've been quoted as saying that no white man could properly do the Malcolm X story, which you're preparing to direct.

LEE: That's right.

PLAYBOY: You don't think Norman Jewison, who was originally scheduled to direct, could pull it off?

LEE: No, I don't. Why do people pull that shit with black people? Don't you think Francis Coppola brought something special to *The Godfather* because he was an Italian? Don't you think that Martin Scorsese brought something special to *GoodFellas* because he was Italian?

PLAYBOY: Marlon Brando's not Italian and he was in *The Godfather*. Isn't the point that there simply aren't enough minorities to be considered?

LEE: Yeah. Now, when that shit changes, then we can talk. Until there are enough black directors, minorities working in movies so it's not an issue, we have to address it different.

PLAYBOY: But what about one director having skills another director doesn't?

LEE: I like Norman Jewison's movies. I respect what he does. I saw *In the Heat of the Night*, *A Soldier's Story*. I respect his work. But I think a black man is more qualified, especially in this case. Now, I do think black people are qualified to direct movies about white people.

PLAYBOY: How does that work?

LEE: Because we grow up with white images all the time, in TV, in movies, in books. It's everywhere; you can't get around it. The white world surrounds us. What do white people see of black people? Look at the shit they have us do in movies. "Right on, jive turkey!" [Laughs]

PLAYBOY: There's a line in *Jungle Fever* that says a black man won't rise past a certain level in white corporate America.

LEE: It's true. How many black men do you see running Xerox? How many black men you see running IBM? Shit, we need to be black entrepreneurs, run our own shit. That's what it's about.

PLAYBOY: Is that what's behind your store, Spike's Joint?

LEE: It started off as this mom-and-pop operation. We sold T-shirts for the movies and stuff, but we just had too much stuff going on. So, yeah, I wanted to get it going the way I wanted. I want to control the business, and it's easier to do it from the store. Black people just have to understand we need to become owners. Ownership is important. I don't mean to get down on Eddie

Murphy, but he only owns 50 percent of Eddie Murphy Productions. His two white managers each own 25 percent of Eddie Murphy Productions. He don't even own 100 percent of himself.

PLAYBOY: You have some other complaints about Murphy, don't you?

LEE: My problem with Eddie has to do with the hiring of black people. He will maintain he can't do nothin' about getting black people hired at Paramount. That's bullshit. A man who makes them a billion dollars can't do nothing about getting black people hired at Paramount? I can't believe that. In my contract, I demand a black man does the design and artwork for my poster. Eddie built Paramount. He built their house, he can bring some people in there if he wants to.

PLAYBOY: Overall, you seem to have become less critical about other black performers. Have you mellowed?

LEE: Look, I was never that critical. When I said that shit about Whoopi Goldberg, I was talking about the contact lenses, she was wearing blue contact lenses. She don't wear them blue contact lenses no more, do she?

PLAYBOY: What's the deal between you and Arsenio Hall?

LEE: [Smiles] Deal? What deal? I been on his show twice. You have to be specific.

PLAYBOY: Wasn't there a quarrel between the two of you?

LEE: I criticized him once. I never criticized him as a talk-show host.

PLAYBOY: Our understanding is that you appeared on his show last summer and were supposed to go back about a month later and were disinvited.

LEE: Yeah. They canceled on me at the last minute. Didn't even hear from him. Some assistant said they didn't want me on the show. It's in the past. Nothing to say about it. It's all been worked out. I was on his show for *Mo' Better*.

PLAYBOY: *Jungle Fever* and *Do the Right Thing* both deal with the relationships between blacks and Italians in the outer boroughs of New York. Why did you choose to deal with that twice?

LEE: Well, history has proven that in New York City, those are the two most violent, volatile combinations of ethnic groups. Black people and Jewish people have static, but it rarely ever elevates to a physical thing. Little Italy, Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, Canarsie—black people know that these are neighbor-

hoods that you don't fuck around in.

PLAYBOY: What do you remember as a kid about that kind of thing—that feeling of fear you talk about?

LEE: Well, I grew up in sort of an Italian neighborhood. I lived in Cobble Hill before I moved here to Fort Greene. A lot of Italian people there. And we were really the first black family to move into Cobble Hill. For the first couple of days, we got called "nigger," but we were basically left alone. We weren't perceived as a threat, because there was only one of us. In fact, some of my best friends who lived down the block were the Tuccis. Louis Tucci, Joe Tucci. Annabella's [*Sciorra*] family [*in Jungle Fever*], they're the Tuccis.

PLAYBOY: While growing up in that kind of neighborhood, what was your feeling about Italians?

LEE: I think Cobble Hill is a lot different than Bensonhurst. You had a lot of Jewish people in Cobble Hill, too, so it just seemed to be more—I don't want to use the word intelligent, but—

PLAYBOY: Tolerant?

LEE: Yeah, that would be a good word.

PLAYBOY: It just seems odd that the kind of neighborhood you depict in your pictures is so different from the kind you grew up in. Did you ever have an encounter in one of those places like Bensonhurst?

LEE: No. See, I went to John Dewey High School on Coney Island. But some of my friends went to other high schools, like F.D.R., Fort Hamilton,

"Eddie Murphy will maintain he can't do nothin' about getting black people hired at Paramount. That's bullshit."



schools like that. They used to chase the black kids from the school to the subway station. A lot of my friends got chased.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever go to Bensonhurst just to see what it's like over there?

LEE: A couple of days after Yusef Hawkins got murdered, this reporter from *Newsday* invited me to walk around Bensonhurst with him. Other than that, I never went to it until we shot *Jungle Fever* over there.

PLAYBOY: What was that walk like?

LEE: Well, I was a celebrity, so it was "Spike, sign an autograph," "Spike, you bringing Michael Jordan around here?" "Spike, you bringing Flavor Flav?" It was exactly like the scene in *Do the Right Thing* between me and Pino over the cigarette machine, with an allowance. Pino says Magic Johnson, Eddie Murphy and Prince aren't black, they're more than black. That's the way I thought I was being viewed. I was "Spike Lee," I wasn't a black person, so they asked me for my autograph. If I was anybody else, I could have gotten a bat over the head.

PLAYBOY: How does it make you feel to be a celebrity in the neighborhood where you more or less grew up?

LEE: Well, I think that people don't necessarily look at me as a celebrity, because they know I grew up here. It's no big thing; they see me every day, buying the paper or walking to work and stuff like that. People say hello, but it's not like [*a throaty scream*] "Spike Lee!" It's not no Beates shit or anything like that.

PLAYBOY: What do people on the street say? Do they tell you what they like or dislike about your movies?

LEE: They come up and tell me how much they like *Mars Blackmon*, or they tell me what they think I should do for my next movie. I'm always getting these comments from people who know exactly what my next movie should be. It's funny—I guess everybody's a director. Or a critic.

PLAYBOY: When you were a kid, did you know you wanted to make movies?

LEE: I didn't grow up thinking I wanted to make movies, be a director. Everybody in my neighborhood saw a lot of movies. There was nothing special about going to the movies. I didn't know what I wanted to do. At Morehouse College, I had a combined major of communications' radio-television, journalism, film—not film night away.

PLAYBOY: Do you remember the first film you saw that made you want to make movies?

LEE: Wait a minute. I never had a moment like that. It was never, "I saw *Lawrence of Arabia* when I was two and suddenly I was hit by the magic power of film." That's bullshit. Like I told you, I just went to the movies. Nobody thought about being a director, not me or anybody else. I read that all the time "After I saw that picture, I knew there was nothing else for me to do"—that's a lie. It's just bullshit when people say that.

PLAYBOY: Maybe it's a lie sometimes, but certainly, some directors see movies as kids and want to make films.

LEE: I think it's bullshit. It's just something almost every director says. I have never believed it. I tell you this. I wasn't that way for me. "That's what makes movies seem like this magical thing" or somethin'. That's just Hollywood bullshit, people saying that shit because it makes makin' movies special, and the people who make movies special. The first time I went on a movie set, it didn't look like nothin' magical to me. [Laughs] It was the exact same thing I was doing on my student movies, only it was bigger and they were spendin' more money. That's what keeps black people out of movies—the idea that makin' movies is some special thing, some calling or something. That's what I'm about—demystifying movies. I want to do away with that bullshit.

PLAYBOY: Do you remember the first Sidney Poitier film you saw?

LEE: It had to be *Lilies of the Field*. I hated that movie. I must have been six, seven years old, but even at that age, I felt like putting a rock through the screen. Later with these nuns! You better get outa here before one of 'em says that you raped 'em! But we owe a lot to Sidney Poitier, because in order for us to get to where we are today, those films had to be made. And Sidney had to do what he had to do. He was the perfect Negro.

PLAYBOY: What did you think when you saw *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*—especially now that you're doing a movie about interracial romance?

LEE: It was white liberal b.s. You have to look at it in the context of when this film came out. This film came out in the 1960s, during the whole civil rights movement. At that time, it was a great advance for black people in the cinema.

PLAYBOY: That aside, what were you thinking as you were sitting there watching it? Were you bored? Angry?

LEE: I wasn't angry. It was just that the only way they would accept this guy was because he was a perfect human being: a doctor, from Harvard or whatever it was. Making a long-distance call and leaving the money out. That's the only way the audience would accept him, because he was such a fine, upstanding citizen.

Sidney had a great burden. He was carrying the whole weight of the hopes and aspirations of the African Americans on his shoulders. I think that had a lot to do with the roles that he chose. I think he felt he could not do a "negative" character. That's something I have tried to do, not get into that whole positive-negative image thing.

PLAYBOY: You must hear that sometimes.

LEE: Sometimes? All the time. Black folks tell me all the time that my image is not a positive portrayal of black people.

PLAYBOY: Did that start with *She's Gotta Have It*?

LEE: She's Gotta Have It has Nola Darling. She's a negative portrayal of black women and just reinforces what white people think about black women being loose, anyway. And *School Daze*—again, it was negative images of black people, showing fighting all the time. I was airing dirty laundry with our differences, which I feel are petty and superficial.

Do the Right Thing, I've got more negative images. None of the black people in *Do the Right Thing* have a job. It shows we're all lazy or whatever. It shows Sweet Dick White peeing against the wall, and that's a negative image of black people.

PLAYBOY: But obviously, you understand the complaints.

LEE: I understand what that means, positive black role models, because of the way black people have been shown in movies and on TV. But it's unrealistic to make every character I come up with a doctor or a lawyer or something that's just a flat character. Like, in *Jungle Fever*, I bring in drugs because it's time. One of the characters is a basehead, because it's appropriate.

PLAYBOY: What about a movie such as *School Daze*, in which you're showing the environment at a black college? Did that get a negative reaction?

LEE: Yeah. The schools themselves were saying it would be a negative portrayal of black higher education. That's one of the reasons why, three weeks into shooting, we got kicked off Morehouse's campus. Spelman refused to let us shoot there at all.

PLAYBOY: In *School Daze*, you showed a part of the black culture—the black middle class—that's not usually shown. Didn't they want that to be shown?

LEE: Yeah, but a lot of the administration and faculty in these schools, these are old schools. To me, they're very backward.

PLAYBOY: Did many of your fellow students rebel at middle-class traditions at Morehouse?

LEE: Yeah. We never got a really big thing, but there were students who were not going along with the program. They didn't want to be that "Morehouse Man."

PLAYBOY: How many films did you shoot when you were in school?

LEE: At Morehouse? I might have done one or two. It was there that I had my appetite whet. That's where I became interested in film and that's where I decided I wanted to become a filmmaker. That's why I went to NYU. At NYU, I started making films.

PLAYBOY: It took you three years to get any work after you graduated from NYU. Did that bother you?

LEE: I have no bitterness. The way it happens is the way it should happen. We had to struggle for three years, but I was a better filmmaker. I don't think

I could have made *She's Gotta Have It* straight out of film school

PLAYBOY: What did it take for you to be ready to make it?

LEE: More maturity. And to be hungrier

PLAYBOY: Where did the money come from?

LEE: Everywhere. Even though the budget for the film was a \$175,000, we never had that money all at one time. When we began the shoot that July, we only had \$13,000 in the bank

Man, that movie was so hard to make. We were cashin' in bottles for change, because we had so little money. I remember, we were shootin' in Noia's loft in the middle of the summer—it musta been 104 degrees up there. When it's so hot, people drink a lot and I remember sayin', "Don't throw away the bottles." That's the one of my movies I can't watch again, *She's Gotta Have It*.

PLAYBOY: Was it so painful to make?

LEE: Yeah, it was hard. We only shot for 12 days, but every night, after we finished the day's work, I had to think about tryin' to go out and raise money for the very next day. Things have changed so much now, you know. We have money for contingencies, reshoots or whatever. Each picture is a little easier. But also, with *She's Gotta Have It*, the acting was bad.

PLAYBOY: You don't like the performances?

LEE: No, not at all. They just weren't very good. I didn't really know how to direct. I wasn't good with the actors, in telling 'em what I wanted from 'em. I was just out of film school, and that was my only experience. In film school, you don't really get to work with actors, you never really have much contact with the actors, and so you're kinda intimidated by 'em. You don't deal with 'em much at all.

PLAYBOY: What was your personal life like at the time?

LEE: Everything was wrapped up in getting this film made. We invited the American independent distributors to come to the San Francisco Film Festival, because that's where the world premiere was going to happen. In the middle of the film, there was a blackout in San Francisco. Not the whole city but that particular neighborhood. So for half an hour—the theater was packed, too—people just sat there. I was sitting there in a chair in the dark, on the stage. There was a question-and-answer period while we waited for the lights to come back on. So I answered questions in the dark, and nobody left.

PLAYBOY: Did you start laughing at that point? You'd been through so much.

LEE: No, I said it was an act of God. What is happening? At the beginning of the movie, a blackout. But that's where the bidding war started. We sold it to Island Pictures for \$475,000 and went on to make \$8 million.

PLAYBOY: How long before you made your next picture?

LEE: That has been the biggest gap of all my films, between *She's Gotta Have It* and *School Daze*. I had to stay with that film a long time. Promote it, get it out there. It came out in '86, and *School Daze* didn't come out until '88. But since then, we've made a film every year.

PLAYBOY: *School Daze* sounds like it was overly ambitious, going from a four-character piece essentially in one room to a big musical with lots of production numbers and lots of characters.

LEE: I didn't think that was overly ambitious. I know that has been reflected in some people's reviews of the film. What I wanted to do in *School Daze* was, in that two-hour movie, was compress my four years of *Morehouse*.

PLAYBOY: Were you surprised by the response that your next film, *Do the Right Thing*, got at the Cannes Film Festival?

LEE: That was a big response. You don't know. Sometimes, what might play in the States might not go in Europe, and vice versa. But I knew they would like *She's Gotta Have It*. It had a very European feel to it, the way it was cut and shot and that kind of stuff.

PLAYBOY: What about what German director Wim Wenders said?

LEE: Oh, yeah, he said that *Do the Right Thing* was "not heroic"? Yeah, very. I was disappointed. I hold no grudges against Wim Wenders now. I never had anything against Steven Soderbergh [who won the Golden Palm that year], because it was not his doing. He made a very good film with sex, lies, and videotape. It was not his fault that he got the award. I know he's happy he got it, but I had no ill feelings toward Steven, and we're still friends today. [Sex, lies, and videotape] was very, very heroic. Especially this James Spader character, this guy jerking off all the time to the TV Taping sexual confessions of women. Very heroic.

PLAYBOY: You said that *Mo' Better Blues*, your fourth film, was consciously noncontroversial. Not only are you dealing with interracial romance in *Jungle Fever*, but you're also dealing with drugs. Why add two controversial elements?

LEE: I don't know. I might have given it the interracial thing, but how is drugs controversial?

PLAYBOY: Because you purposefully avoided, you said, drugs as a subplot previously in *Do the Right Thing*.

LEE: Yeah, but I don't think the word is controversy. I'm not gonna let any critic determine my agenda. I find it preposterous that critics would attack me for not having drugs in *Do the Right Thing*, as if drugs were the complete domain of black people. How could you do a film set in Bed-Stuy without any drugs? Easy. We black people aren't the only people on drugs. The reason you've got drugs on the so-called agenda is because you've got

young white kids in middle-class America and white suburbia who are doing crack and whatever. Then it becomes a national problem. As long as it was contained within the black ghettos, you would never see that problem being dealt with on the covers of *Time* or *Newsweek*. And if that is the case, which it is, then why have I never read of any white filmmakers being chastised for not having drugs in their films?

PLAYBOY: Obviously, the critics thought the criticism was valid because of that particular neighborhood.

LEE: Hey, there's as much drugs in Bed-Stuy as there is on Wall Street or the Upper East Side.

PLAYBOY: How did you get hooked up with the Fruit of Islam? Some people criticize that group's militancy and its association with Louis Farrakhan.

LEE: When we did location scouting for *Do the Right Thing*, we needed a block in Bed-Stuy that had two empty lots on the corner that faced each other. We had to build a pizzeria, and build a Korean fruit and vegetable stand. It turned out there were two or three crack houses on the block, or in the vicinity, so knowing the Fruit—they don't play that—we brought them in. They closed down the crack houses and they stayed on for security for the rest of the film.

PLAYBOY: It seems ironic that the movie doesn't deal with drugs and you had to run the crack dealers off the block.

LEE: I don't find it ironic. Drugs is a part of our society, but I felt they should not be a part of this story. This film was really about 24 hours in the life of this block on the hottest day of the summer. It was really about race relations. I didn't want to put drugs in this.

PLAYBOY: You seem very sure of yourself, and yet you've consistently portrayed the characters you play in your films as powerless and ineffectual.

LEE: Yeah, well, I don't see the need to make myself the hero in my movies. What's the point in that?

PLAYBOY: Why do you keep playing the same kind of character?

LEE: I'm not that impressed with myself as an actor. I don't think much of myself that way. I don't have a whole lot of range as far as acting. Mars Blackmon, that was all right. I didn't expect people to like him, the way

"Black folks tell me
all the time that my
image is not a posi-
tive portrayal of
black people."



they did.

PLAYBOY: What makes you continue to act in your pictures?

LEE: It really has to do with box office, with having somewhat of a little appeal with the audience. People will be more apt to come to one of my films if I'm in it.

PLAYBOY: Will you be in *Malcolm X*?

LEE: Probably. [Laughs] I still need to be in my films.

PLAYBOY: *Mo' Better Blues* was criticized for its portrayal of Jews. There's even a story about your father having gone down to apologize to the owner of a Village jazz club because of your portrayal of Jews in that film.

LEE: Huh? I can't respond to that, because I never heard it before. Look, Siskel and Ebert—I shouldn't say this, 'cause they're fans of mine. Soon as *Mo' Better Blues* comes out, they [start talking about] stereotypes. Then came [New York Times critic] Caryn James with her stupid-ass article. Nobody was supposed to take those guys as representin' all Jews. Besides, where was everybody when that what's-his-name movie with Steven Seagal came out?

PLAYBOY: *Marked for Death*?

LEE: What about that racist piece of shit? That's a number-one hit for a couple of weeks, and where was everybody when that came out? They had nothin' to say about it.

PLAYBOY: What did you think when you saw it?

LEE: I didn't see it.

PLAYBOY: One of the best things in your films tends to be their improvisational quality, the way you handle the interplay between people.

LEE: Yeah, it helps to have actors who know how to improvise. Not everybody's good at it.

PLAYBOY: Like who?

LEE: I don't wanna say

PLAYBOY: Wait a second. You're worried about hurting somebody's feelings? When the Oscars came around in 1990, you didn't seem so worried about hurting people's feelings.

LEE: That didn't have nothin' to do with hurting people's feelings. It was that Fred Schelp Sheep—What's that guy's name? That Australian guy?

PLAYBOY: Fred Schepisi? What about him?

LEE: You know, the one who did *Driving Miss Daisy*?

PLAYBOY: You mean Bruce Beresford.

LEE: Him. Yeah, him. Bruce Beresford. When he was complaining about not getting a nomination for Best Director, nobody made anything of that. Or when [Richard] Zanuck, he started complaining, you know, about *Driving Miss Daisy*, how could it get a Best Picture nomination and not get a Best Director nomination? It was as soon as I started sayin' we got robbed on *Do the Right Thing*, suddenly, I'm the one, I'm the problem.

PLAYBOY: People think you're an artist, and they have higher expectations of you. When you complain about being shut out, people are let down by it.

LEE: I don't buy that. I don't believe that. I was complaining about the Oscars because we should've got a Best Picture nomination.

PLAYBOY: A lot of movies that stand the test of time never get nominated for Oscars or they never win Oscars.

LEE: Oscars, they can mean money. You know, you get a Best Picture nomination and the studios, they can promote a picture, advertise. They can get more people to come out and see it. People were afraid to come see *Do the Right Thing* as it was, afraid there would be riots and shit.

PLAYBOY: Some people claim that you use racism as a tool to strike out at others, such as in your attack of New York Times critic Janet Maslin's review of *School Daze*, when you said, "I bet she can't even dance. Does

she have rhythm?"

LEE: She didn't get the point of *School Daze*, and the way she dished it, talking about "my little musical." Race is an issue, and I don't always use it. You'd think I don't like critics. I don't like *The New York Times*. Well, I read Vincent Canby.

PLAYBOY: You've always had a dicey relationship with the press. Stanley Crouch, in his essay "Do the Race Thing," discusses how you tried to have it both ways with *Do the Right Thing*, by quoting Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

LEE: That ignorant motherfucker. He has no idea what he's talking about. Shut, what about all those motherfuckers like Joe Klein at New York sayin' *Do the Right Thing* would cause a riot, because it was released during the summer? Or David Denby callin' it irresponsible? That's irresponsible. And it's lazy. When the riots didn't happen, when Dinkins got elected, neither one of them, none of the people who said that shut, said they were wrong in print or apologize.

PLAYBOY: What about the Nike Air Jordan controversy? New York Post columnist Phil Mushnick wrote that you and Michael Jordan glamorize expensive shoes and sometimes kids are killed in robberies over them.

LEE: Shut. What about it? It's my fault, it's Michael Jordan's fault, that kids are buying those shoes? That's just the trigger. There's more to it than that. Something is wrong where these young black kids have to put so much weight, where their whole life is tied up—their life is so hopeless—that their life is defined by a pair of sneakers. Or a sheepskin coat. The problem

is not the coat or the sneakers. I mean, we tried to explore that with *Do the Right Thing* with the radio. These young black kids who are lost. Radio Raheem [the character who's killed by the police]—his life was that radio. That really defined his existence. I mean, without that radio, he's invisible; people don't notice him. But with that radio blasting Public Enemy and "Fight the Power," you had to deal with him. It made people notice him. It gave him self-worth. And when Sal killed his radio, he might as well have killed his mother or his father or himself. That's why he tried to choke the shit out of Sal.

PLAYBOY: What about that Sports Illustrated article where Jordan was almost

reduced to tears? He's publicly remorseful, disturbed by what his endorsement may have caused.

LEE: What the fuck? You think I'm happy black men are dying over shoes? Hell, no! Hell, no! I'm upset about it too. Is every black man who wears those shoes a drug dealer? Hell, no! You know how that is. Look at you. You're wearing Pumps. Are you a drug dealer? Hell, no! They're oversimplifying the issue.

PLAYBOY: Okay, let's ask an easy question. What is Michael Jordan really like?

LEE: Mike's a down brother. Mike just had a lot of confidence in me. He was a young brother. He liked *She's Gotta Have It*. He felt like I did, that it was important that we hook up. Mike pulled me to the side and said, "Look, there's been some grumbling where Nike is trying to ease you out. But as long as I'm around, you're around." I said, "I hear you, Mike. Thank you for getting me back." That's why I did those commercials. I thought it was important that me and Mike do something together. Young black people in different fields, hooking up.

PLAYBOY: Did your parents encourage you to go into the arts?

LEE: Not really. Whatever you wanted to do was fine with them. They encouraged us, but they never pushed me in any direction. I will say that we had great exposure to the arts at a young age. We had to. My mother taught art, she liked the theater and liked music. My father is a jazz musician—he played with folk singers, too, like Theodore Bikel and Josh White—so mu

"People were afraid
to come see 'Do
the Right Thing,'
afraid there would
be riots and shit."

sic was always being played in the house. I remember my mother dragging me to The King and I with Yul Brynner when I was little. I started crying; I was scared to death. She had to take me home.

PLAYBOY: What was the first thing you remember sitting through and really enjoying as a kid, even if it didn't make you want to be a filmmaker?

LEE: When I was real little, I saw *Hatari*. Remember that? John Wayne in a safari film, with the rhinoceros. And *Bye Bye Birdie*. My mother would take me to see James Bond films, *Goldfinger* and *Dr. No*. I remember her taking me to see *A Hard Day's Night*.

PLAYBOY: Did you like that?

LEE: Yeah. I liked the Beatles when I was little. My father would turn down the radio when he came in the house.

PLAYBOY: He didn't like the Beatles?

LEE: He didn't like no music besides jazz. [*Shouts*] "Turn that bad music off!"

PLAYBOY: Did you always know you were going to college?

LEE: Yeah. I mean, what else was I gonna do? My father and my grandfather, they went to college, so it was there for me too. What else would I do, work at a McDonald's? Go work for somebody else? I never thought about rebellin', not gonn' to college. It was what I was gonna do.

PLAYBOY: You sound like you were a practical kid, not a troublemaker.

LEE: I grew up as the oldest, so I had to be practical. The oldest child has to take care of the younger kids. They're always the most practical.

PLAYBOY: What was your relationship with the kids in the neighborhood?

LEE: I was always a leader, I was the one organizing stuff.

PLAYBOY: Did you like school as a kid?

LEE: Not really.

PLAYBOY: Did you do well?

LEE: Just good enough to get by.

PLAYBOY: Which must not have made your mother too happy, since she was a teacher.

LEE: She was always on me. I'd get an 80 and I'd be happy, but she'd be like, "Well, you shouldn't be content with an 80. Them Jewish kids are getting 95." [*Laughs*] But she was right.

PLAYBOY: Do you wonder what it would be like if you were growing up now?

LEE: It would be frightening, with the violence and the access to weapons and guns, and the drugs. Before, we used to be terrified if we even saw somebody taking a puff on a joint. But now, if you're a parent, you pray to God that's all your child is doing is smoking marijuana.

PLAYBOY: Do you think there's a lack of emphasis on education now?

LEE: Right. Half of the young black males here in New York City don't even finish high school. But this is not to say that I'm blaming them. I'm not trying to point a finger at the victim. I think that the educational system has failed. At the same time, I've never been one just to blame white people for everything, for all of our ills. We have to take some responsibility. If stuff's going to be corrected, it's up to us. It's up to the parents. What are these kids doing outside late at night? Eight years old and hanging out later than I am. Running in the streets at two, three, four in the morning. Where are their parents?

When we were growing up, people looked out after each other. Other parents could tell you something. If somebody else's mother saw you doing something wrong, that mother would treat you as if you were her child.

PLAYBOY: But you also got straightened out in school, right?

LEE: Yeah, I think that discipline, that's what's really lacking. I'm not saying let's go back to the Dark Ages when they were hitting kids in school with rulers, but discipline is really lacking.

PLAYBOY: Does it make you leery of having a family?

LEE: No, not really at all. When I do have a family, I don't want to send them to private school, because I feel that's too sheltered.

PLAYBOY: Even given the problems with the educational system?

LEE: I will be able to get my kids in the best public schools here. I mean, there are good public schools here, but there aren't that many. I went to public school, my brother Chris went to public school. But David, Joie and

Cinque went to private school. I always could tell a difference in them because they went to private school. Their negritude got honed or harnessed going into these predominantly white private schools. That's where my mother was teaching.

PLAYBOY: Do you talk about this?

LEE: They know it. Most of their friends were white. Not that I have anything against that, it's just that there is definitely an argument for being around your own people.

PLAYBOY: A lot of the parents who send their kids to private schools today went to public schools themselves. They fear their children won't get a good education or be safe at a public school.

LEE: They're justified in thinking that. People are getting shot and stabbed in school. That's not supposed to happen in a school.

PLAYBOY: Did your mother try to keep you away from the bad kids in the neighborhood?

LEE: No. There were never any gangs. I don't remember ever seeing any. There were people who would steal your lunch money, but that wasn't no gang thing. I mean, now they'll shoot you. When I was growing up, they might take a quarter from you. You give it up.

PLAYBOY: Or fight.

LEE: Yeah, but it's not like "Give us your leather coat or I'll shoot you."

PLAYBOY: Since the educational system is so bad, why should kids be unemployed college grads when they could sell crack and make a lot of money?

LEE: That is something that is going to have to be dealt with, the economics. Forget about the moral issue, even though it should play into it. It's not going to weigh when these kids are faced with the fact of making minimum wage at McDonald's or making three and four thousand a week selling crack. Not everybody, but a lot of them are going to sell that crack and make that money. You're not thinking about how you might end up dead, eventually, or end up in jail. That's not the point. Now you can buy that BMW or whatever. Gold chains and gold teeth. Kangols and Kazals.

PLAYBOY: Where do you think that materialism comes from?

LEE: Well, when people don't have anything, they have to try and show they do have something. And you show that by what you wear or the car you drive. "I'm not like all the rest of these poor niggers. I got something."

PLAYBOY: Don't some black kids view education itself as white?

LEE: There's something very sick where if you speak well and you speak articulately, that's looked at as being negative and speaking white. I remember when I was growing up, people used to tell me, "You sound white." I've been reading of various cases where kids flunk on purpose so they'll be considered "down" with the home boys and stuff. That's crazy when intelligence is thought of as being white and all the other stuff is being black and being down. I think that one has to be able to navigate both worlds. You ought to be able to speak with your brothers on the street but at the same time be able to go to a job interview, fill out the application and speak proper English. You've got to have both. I don't think it makes you any less black by being articulate.

PLAYBOY: Where do you think that attitude comes from?

LEE: I think all this stuff you could really trace to our hatred of ourselves. Everything we do, eventually, if you keep going back far enough, you'll see that we've been taught to hate ourselves. And until we stop that, all this other shit we're doing is just going to continue to happen.

PLAYBOY: Comedian Franklyn Ajaye said that one of the things he didn't like about *In Living Color* when he was a writer there was that everybody talked like they were down. He didn't see any kind of reflection of articulate black life in the show, and that bothered him.

LEE: Me and Keenen [*Ivory Wayans*] talked about it. He was on the cover of *New York* magazine, and in the article, they said they had 13 writers and only three or four were black. The rest were all these Jewish kids that went to Harvard. So I just asked Keenen what's up. He explained to me all he's done for black people, as far as the show is concerned. I'm not going to dispute that. I'm not saying it's because they did the skit on me, but if you have some white kid from Harvard joking about Malcolm X—Lax—I don't



think that shut is funny. I don't think they'd allow a black person to make a joke about Golda Meir.

PLAYBOY: Do you think being educated means that you're not black?

LEE: In a perverse kind of way. Everything has been kind of turned upside down. I think we've just got a lot of things turned around.

PLAYBOY: When did that happen?

LEE: A lot of things happened after the civil rights movement, where we thought we were making strides and progress. Somewhere from the end of the Sixties up to now, we got off the path. Or we were led off the path. I think that we really haven't advanced a lot. For me, the biggest problem is that people get tricked. Because of the visibility of a couple of African Americans who are able to split through, mostly in entertainment or the sports industry, it gives off the perception that black people have made great strides and that everything is all right. But the reality is, we're not all right. You look at all the black people who are dying of cancer, hypertension, AIDS. The permanently unemployed. The black underclass now is larger than it's ever been. But people are tricked into not really taking that stuff into account. I'm not blaming these people. They're tricked because they see Oprah Winfrey, they see Bill Cosby, they see Spike Lee, they see Eddie Murphy, they see Michael Jordan, they see Bo Jackson, Paula Abdul, M.C. Hammer, Janet Jackson, Arsenio Hall. But we're just a couple of people. We were the exception, not the rule. We were able to slide through that microscopic crack that was open for a second.

PLAYBOY: Is it because you think there are so many visible black people that—

LEE: Wait. If you look at the context of all the shows that are on TV and all the movies that are made, and then look at the percent, it's not that many. It's just the perception that there's a lot of us.

PLAYBOY: Based on that perception and the fact that you can say there may be more successful, visible black people than ever, the perception is that—

LEE: We've arrived. And that's not the case at all. I mean, there's not one person outside of Eddie Murphy, really, not one African American in Hollywood who can green-light a picture. Who can say, "I want this picture made," and that's it.

PLAYBOY: You can't get that done?

LEE: No matter what? For me to get a film made, I have to present a script, and they either do it or they don't. But every studio has people who are the guardians of the gate. They're the ones who say this picture gets made and this picture doesn't. And there are no black people in that position in Hollywood. I mean, we're getting ready to have a big fight with the Teamsters here in New York because they don't have no black people. We used the Teamsters on *Do the Right Thing*, *Mo' Better* and *Jungle Fever*, and the amount that we paid for the Teamsters for all three films is like three quarters of a million dollars. And there are only three or four black Teamsters in the whole union, here in New York. I refuse to give money to organizations that are openly into hiring practices that may exclude blacks. So we're about to go toe to toe with them on Malcolm X.

PLAYBOY: You're not going to use them?

LEE: If they don't get some more black people in it, they can kiss our ass. We told them that. They even refused to sit down with us and meet. They said, "We will let no one dictate to us who to hire."

PLAYBOY: So they deny any discriminatory practices?

LEE: The Teamsters, man, it's predominantly Irish. This particular branch I'm talking about here in New York. The Teamsters who work on movies.

PLAYBOY: How long have you been talking to them about this? Since you started to use them?

LEE: Yeah. They've been appeasing us. They might give us one or two, but we told them we wanted a black Teamster captain and we wanted five

black people to get their books. They trick you sometimes. Let me not use the word trick, but they might put black people on your film, but they don't have their books. Meaning they're not full-fledged members of the union and don't receive the full benefits of the union. If you're a Teamster here in New York, they have the best benefits of any union in the country. Any of their children, they can go to college—free. Whatever college you choose. The union will pay for it.

PLAYBOY: And there are just a handful of black people in the union?

LEE: A handful, I mean, they just admitted one who got his book recently. But the last time one got admitted before that was 1962. There's too much money being made. I refuse to give money to an organization like that that's just so overtly racist in their hiring practices.

PLAYBOY: There is obviously now a big trend toward trying to increase the African-American inclusion in the movie mainstream. We've heard that people are already expecting a backlash. Remember when *The Wit* and *Ragtime* failed—

LEE: That was it. They said, "Black people don't support these films. Let's stop making black films." The blame was never put on Sidney Lumet, or the score, or the casting of Diana Ross. That is not to disrespect any of them, but the blame was put solely on "black people who failed to support this film." Whereas, if a white film doesn't work, it would be the director or whoever.

PLAYBOY: In some ways, there seems to be a renaissance of black participation in popular culture. There's you and Robert Townsend, *In Living Color* and the enormous effect of rap.

LEE: Yeah, that's true. They've finally realized black people contribute, and black audiences are a power in the entertainment market. Studios know there's just too much money to be made now from black audiences. And that people wanna see us, too.

PLAYBOY: Do you worry that history will repeat itself?

LEE: I think that this is a very crucial time. Every film studio, if you're black and even look like you're a director, they're signing you. And it's very important that all these people who are getting opportunities really be serious. I'm not

trying to speak like I'm the grandfather of black cinema. But I think that there are a lot of people who are getting deals now—and more power to them—but I don't know if they're going to last. They just think that you can just walk off the street and direct a movie—and it is not true. This ain't just no bullshit; "Well, I'm just directing a film. I don't need to know nothing about film grammar or film history," or any other thing that one needs to know to become a film director.

PLAYBOY: You talked about being attacked for the Nola Darling character in *She's Gotta Have It*. Do you think you're becoming more enlightened about your portrayals of women?

LEE: This is something I've known all along. Every filmmaker has a weakness, just like athletes.

PLAYBOY: But we're not talking about every filmmaker.

LEE: No, I'm saying every filmmaker, every athlete has weaknesses. If you come into the league hitting 50 percent at the free-throw line, you've got to do something about your foul shooting if you want to be a complete baller. My female characters were something I needed to work on. It was lacking. It's something I've tried to concentrate on.

PLAYBOY: We always thought one of the interesting things about Nola was that she lived her life the way she wanted to.

LEE: Yeah, but that wasn't the only film where they talked about the female characters. *School Daze*—they weren't as multidimensional as the male characters. There weren't enough of them in *Do the Right Thing*. And in *Mo' Better*, all they wanted was the man, they didn't have a life of their own—which I don't agree with for that particular film.

"You think I'm happy
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about it too."

PLAYBOY: How does this affect your personal relationships? Do women have preconceived notions about you?

LEE: I don't really think you can break that question down to a sex thing, as far as male-female. I think that's just in general. Any time you're out in the public eye, people, when they meet you in person, they expect you to live up to that expectation of what that persona is. A lot of people expect me to be more animated, and they're kind of disappointed. "I didn't know you were quiet." So that really has nothing to do with male-female.

PLAYBOY: What about your relationships with white people? It's clear that a lot of white people are afraid of you.

LEE: I guess you fear stuff you don't understand. I don't think any white folks have anything to fear from me.

PLAYBOY: Still, almost all of the movie industry is white. All they ever see are other white people.

LEE: With a small smattering of Jewish people. [Laughs] I don't know why some Jewish people get upset when you say that there are a lot of Jewish people in the movie industry. That's the truth. That's like saying there are blacks in the N.B.A. That's not making a judgment, that's just a fact.

PLAYBOY: Do they really get sensitive when you say there are lots of Jews in the industry?

LEE: Yeah. The New York Times, there was this whole black-Jewish Hollywood thing. It was sparked by the convention the NAACP had in Hollywood where they said that Hollywood is racist and so on, and that it was run predominantly by Jewish people.

PLAYBOY: You must get a lot of calls whenever something like that happens.

LEE: Hooo, from around the world! The phone rings off the hook at our office. I think that this is what happens when the media appoints their so-called spokesperson for black people. This is something I have never wanted to achieve. It's not something I've chased after. And, for the most part, I don't say anything. But there are instances where stuff has to be spoken on. But, for the most part, I only answer about five percent of their questions.

PLAYBOY: What do you think about the future for African Americans?

LEE: If you look at the eight years of Reagan and maybe another eight of Bush, and the way they're dismantling affirmative action and all that stuff we fought for and died for, or the Supreme Court that's being appointed—Bush tried to pull this thing where it's discriminatory for schools to have scholarships for black students, and then they get this Uncle Tom handkerchief-head Negro to announce it as assistant secretary [of the Education Department]. Nobody even heard of this motherfucker, but the moment that this program has to be implemented and an announcement has to be made, they pull this Negro off the shelf. How are we supposed to go to school? It's a shame that we've still got Uncle Toms like this around. That guy should be beat with a Louisville Slugger in an alley. He got used. That's the only reason why they hired him, for something specific like that that was going to affect black people. So by the Bush Administration having this black person make this announcement, it can't be racist—we got a black person saying it.

PLAYBOY: Do you wonder if there has been some complacency since the civil rights movement?

LEE: I think America just really arrived at the point where it said, Look—and I think the mandate was handed down by Reagan—where it said, Look, we are tired of you niggers. You've got about as much as you're gonna get from us, and that's it. Period.

PLAYBOY: Some black people say they don't want special consideration.

LEE: Special? I don't think it's special, the fact that we were brought here as slaves and we've been robbed of our heritage and everything else. I mean, I don't consider that special.

PLAYBOY: So we take it you don't have much truck with black conservatives.

LEE: They'll sell you out in a minute. They sold us out. I mean, they're trying to make a big deal out of this what's-his-name, Colin Powell.

PLAYBOY: You don't think that he's a formidable figure? He's the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—that shows black progress, doesn't it?

LEE: So what? So we've got a black general that's going to be head of the Army that kills black people in Panama? Kills black people in Nicaragua? People of color in the Middle East? How come every war now is against people of color in Third World countries? They talk about fighting for democracy: Is South Africa democratic? I know it would be too farfetched to ask Bush to send troops into South Africa to fight for black people, so let's not talk about that. But how about sanctions? He's trying to lift the mother-fucking sanctions! Saddam does not compare to what De Klerk and all them crooks down there in South Africa are doing and have been doing. But they're white, so it's not perceived as that.

PLAYBOY: So you think it's another instance of racism?

LEE: Yes. I'm not going to say that Saddam might not be a maniac, but if you just study the way the press portrays Noriega, Ortega, Hussein, the ayatollah and the way they portray people like Botha, De Klerk, Cecil Rhodes—I mean, it's the difference between night and day. I have to give in, they have a point on Hitler and Mussolini, but since World War II, there is a difference in the way they portray dictators.

PLAYBOY: But look at the way the Soviets were portrayed.

LEE: That was really during the Cold War. They didn't send no troops into Lithuania and shit. They bogarted that country the same way that Hussein bogarted Kuwait. For me, the United States is not on the moral ground to judge anybody, because it's the most hypocritical country in the world. So, to me, they really can't say shit about nobody, because they got a lot of shit with themselves.

PLAYBOY: Do you think that after the civil rights movement lost its figureheads—Martin Luther King and Malcolm X—it lost momentum?

LEE: It did, but that's a mistake of putting emphasis on personality and people instead of the movement. As long as we continue to do that and make cults around our leaders, all they have to do to stop it any time we're making ground is just kill us off, kill off that leader.

PLAYBOY: What have you learned in your research for the Malcolm X movie?

LEE: That Malcolm was a very complex person. There were three or four different Malcolms. He was constantly evolving, his outlook and his ideology, and always trying to seek the truth. If he found it, he was not scared of being called a hypocrite. If he found a higher truth, he would say, "I was wrong. All that stuff I said before is wrong, and this is what I believe." That's something that very few people do.

PLAYBOY: Have your feelings about him changed since you started doing the research?

LEE: I think that I've really grown to love Malcolm more. What he stood for and what he died for.

PLAYBOY: What did you think when you first read his autobiography?

LEE: It was just a revelation. I have deep respect for Dr. King, but I've always been drawn more to Malcolm. I just cannot get with Dr. King's complete nonviolence philosophy.

PLAYBOY: Malcolm was moving in that direction himself, wasn't he?

LEE: No. Malcolm never moved away from defending oneself, the right to protect the self. He never moved away from that. Malcolm would never say, "Go to a march, get hit upside the head, and hopefully, after you get enough knocked upside the head, the white man will see how evil he is and will stop." He never said that, and he was never moving toward that. He's always been about the right to protect oneself. Malcolm never advocated violence. He said one should reserve the right to protect oneself.

PLAYBOY: Doesn't it seem interesting that there has finally come a time when a major studio will give you—

LEE: Yeah, 20 years and more since he's been dead and buried. He no longer seems such a threat. This film would not have been done in 1966, the year after he got assassinated. No way.

PLAYBOY: But look at what you get a chance to do now.

LEE: It's a great opportunity.

PLAYBOY: Are you up for it?

LEE: Yeah. Everything I've done has really prepared me for this film. It's led me in this direction. I've got no intention of dropping the ball.



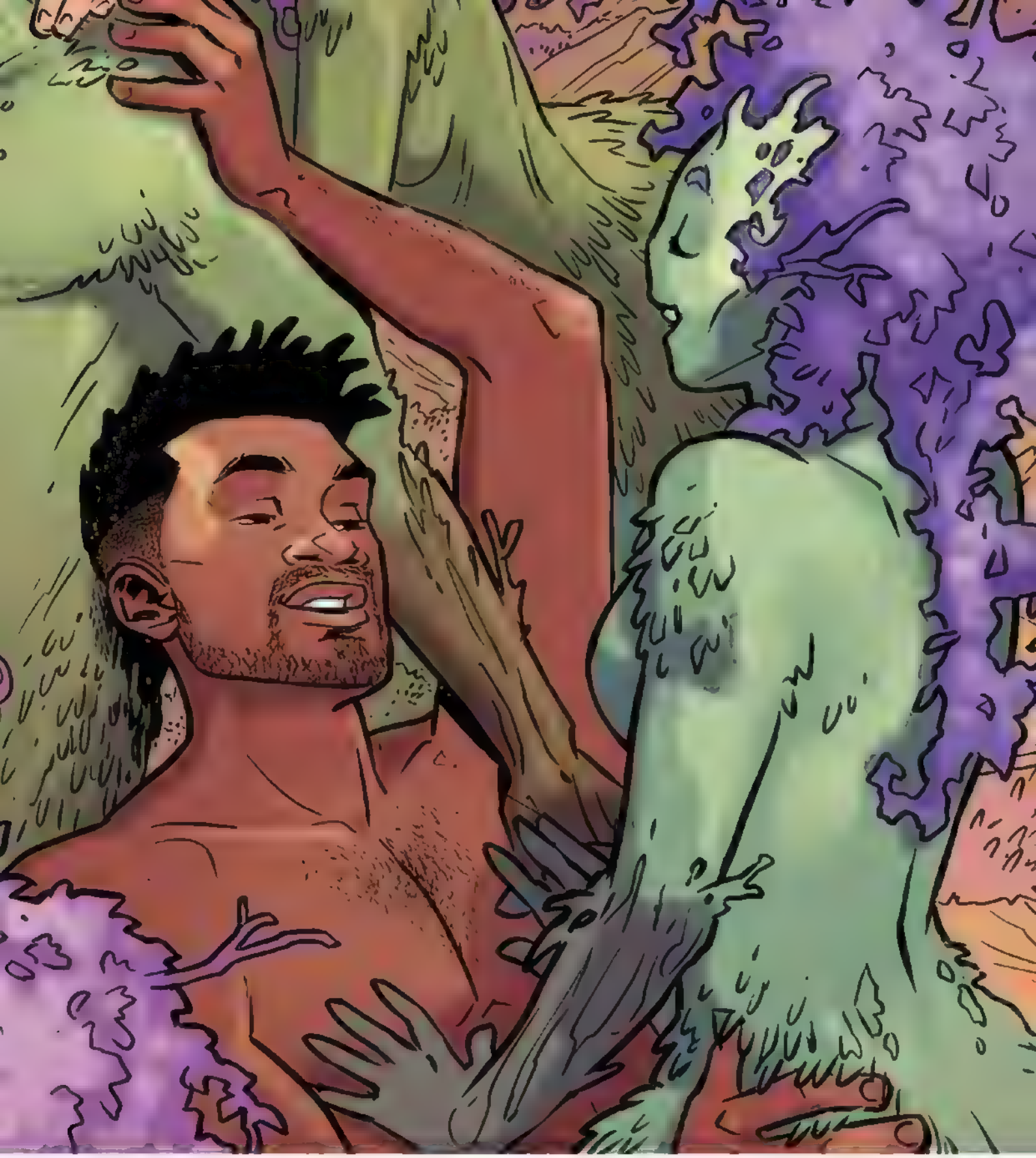
Money Shot: Pleasure Planet

The triple-X
space sex-ploers
are at it again
in this exclusive
tale for Playboy

BY
TIM SEELEYSARAH BEATTIE

ILLUSTRATION BY
REBEKAH ISAACKURT MICHAEL RUSSELL

As they skip through space seeking exciting new alien partners to bang for bucks—turns out live-streaming intergalactic porn ain't a bad way to raise research funds—the intrepid crew encounters an entity that gives new meaning to phrase “big love.”



WRITTEN BY
TIM SEELEY & SARAH BEATTIE

ADULT COMICS PRESENTS

Planet Omalauri-3-E Prime

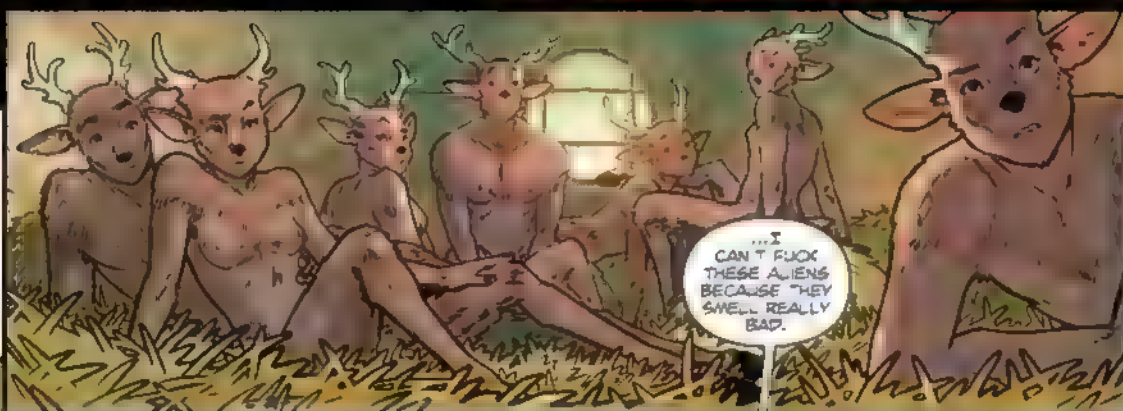
Money Shot

DRAWN BY
REBEKAH ISAACS
COLORED BY
KURT MICHAEL RUSSELL
LETTERED BY
CRANK!

NOPE,
I'M SORRY,
I CAN'T DO IT.
I'M OUT

I'M A FLAVOR
TECHNOLOGIST. OKAY?
I'M EXTREMELY GIFTED
IN THE CHEMISTRY OF
SENSATION, AND SCENT
FIGURES HEAVILY
INTO THAT.

SO, HERE'S
MY SCENT-FIC
ASSESSMENT...



GOD DAMN IT,
DOUG. SINCE WHEN
DO YOU GET TO
BE THE PICKY
ONE?

HE'S RIGHT, THOUGH. THE WATER HERE HAS A HIGHER
CONCENTRATION OF PURINE NUCLEOTIDES, WHICH ARE
RELEASED IN THE NATIVES' SKIN, CREATING AN
AROMA SIMILAR TO URINE AND--

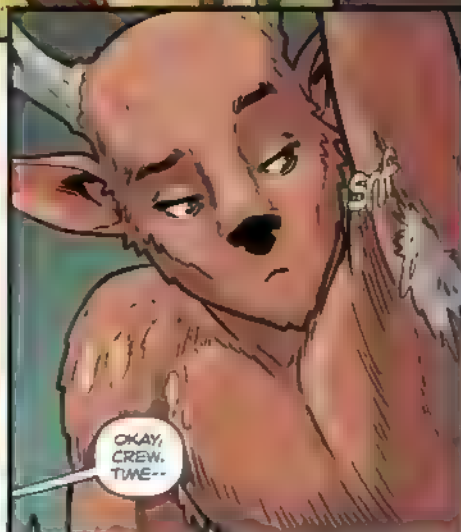
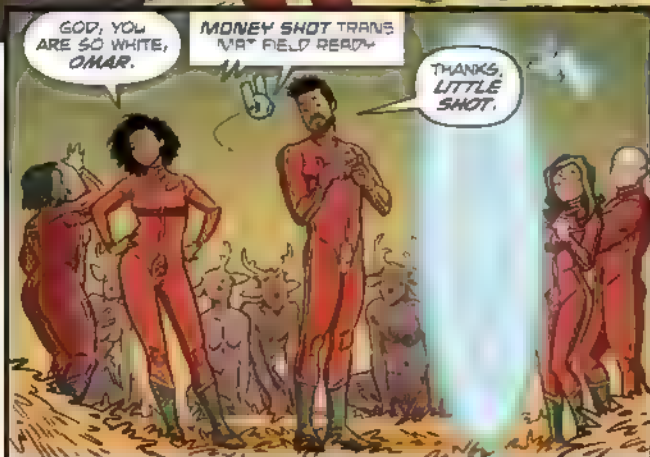
"GAS FACE,"
CHRIS. WE CAN'T DO
A LIVE SHOW HERE BECAUSE
THERE ISN'T ANYTHING SEXY
ABOUT US ALL DOING
GAS FACE.

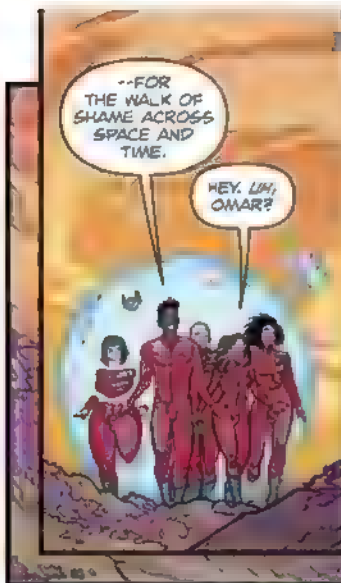
GAS FACE?
IS THAT ONE OF
THOSE HIP-HOP
THINGS?

GOD, YOU
ARE SO WHITE,
OMAR.

MONEY SHOT TRANS
VIB FIELD READY

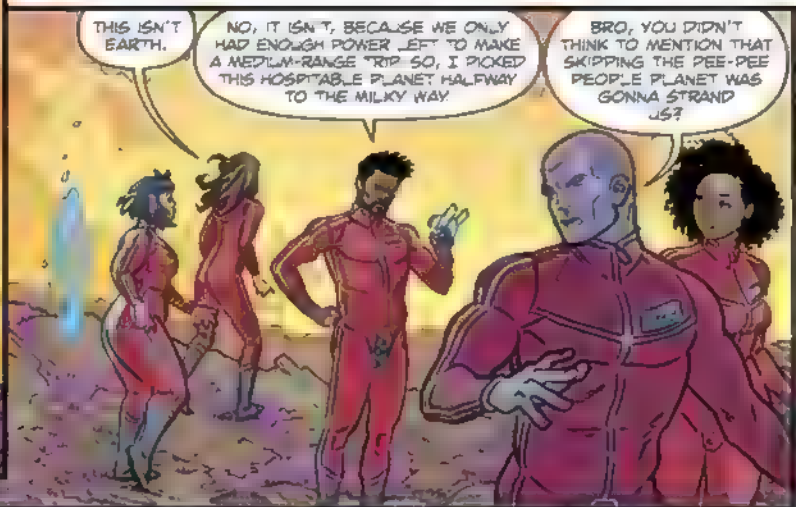
THANKS,
LITTLE
SHOT.





--FOR THE WALK OF SHAME ACROSS SPACE AND TIME.

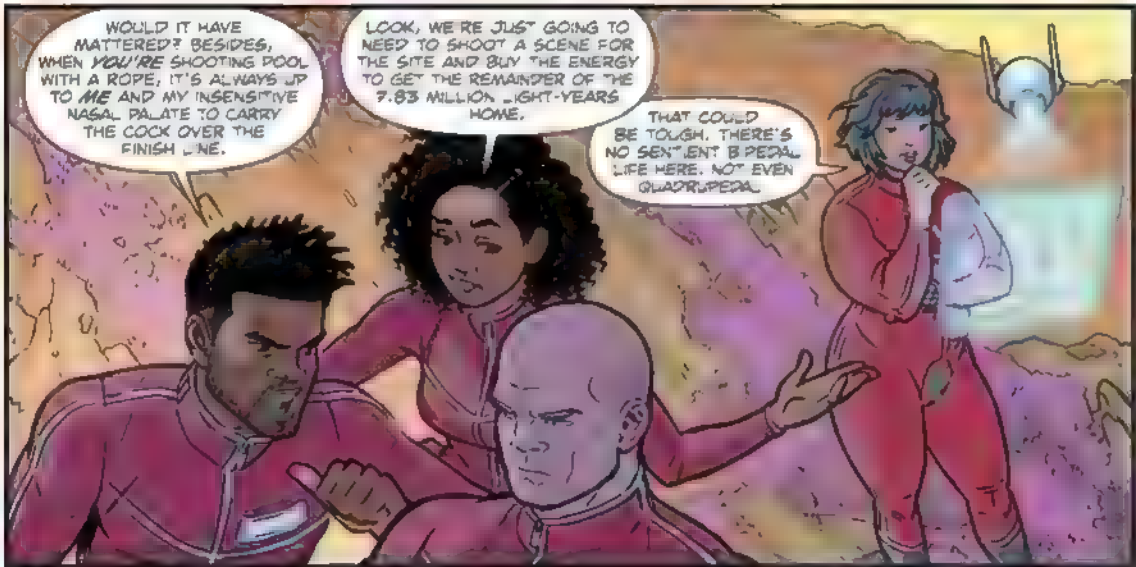
HEY, LIL' OMAR?



THIS ISN'T EARTH.

NO, IT ISN'T, BECAUSE WE ONLY HAD ENOUGH POWER LEFT TO MAKE A MEDIUM-RANGE TRIP SO, I PICKED THIS HOSPITABLE PLANET HALFWAY TO THE MILKY WAY.

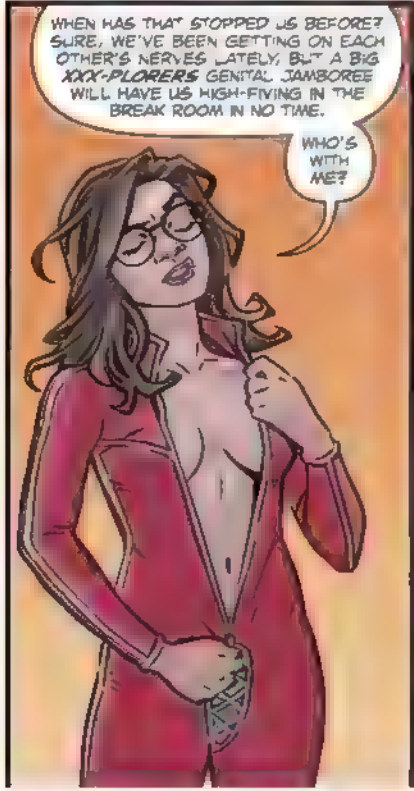
BRO, YOU DIDN'T THINK TO MENTION THAT SKIPPING THE PEE-PEE PEOPLE PLANET WAS GONNA STRAND US?



WOULD IT HAVE MATTERED? BESIDES, WHEN YOU'RE SHOOTING POOL WITH A ROPE, IT'S ALWAYS UP TO ME AND MY INSENSITIVE NASAL PALATE TO CARRY THE COCK OVER THE FINISH LINE.

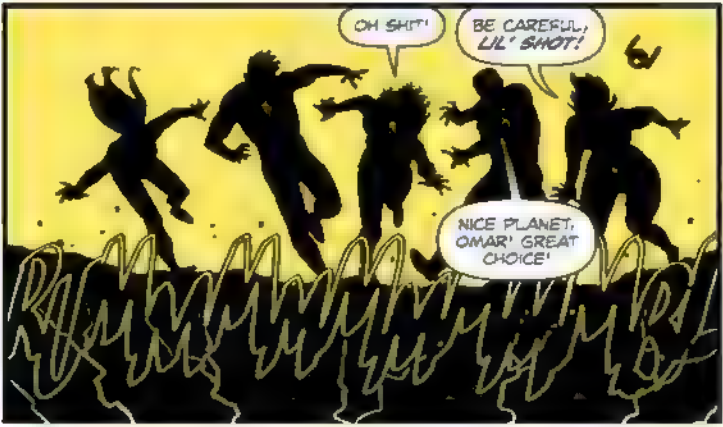
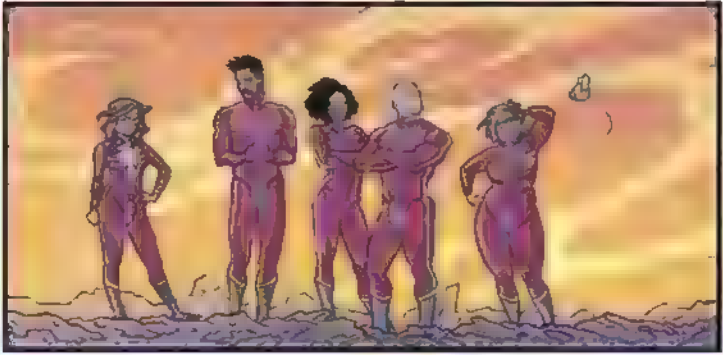
LOOK, WE'RE JUST GOING TO NEED TO SHOOT A SCENE FOR THE SITE AND BUY THE ENERGY TO GET THE REMAINDER OF THE 7.83 MILLION LIGHT-YEARS HOME.

THAT COULD BE TOUGH. THERE'S NO SENTIENT B PEDAL LIFE HERE. NOT EVEN QUADRUPEDAL.



WHEN HAS THAT STOPPED US BEFORE? SURE, WE'VE BEEN GETTING ON EACH OTHER'S NERVES LATELY, BUT A BIG XXX-PLORERS GENITAL JAMBOREE WILL HAVE US HIGH-FIVING IN THE BREAK ROOM IN NO TIME.

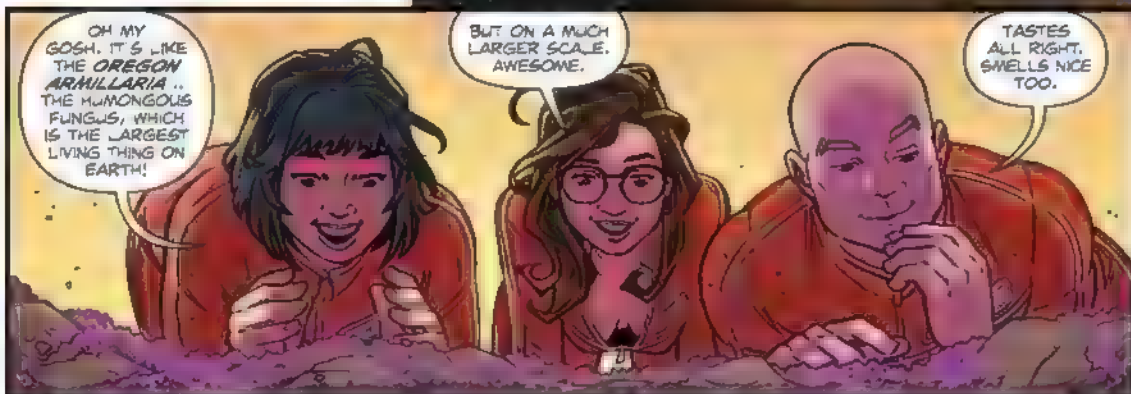
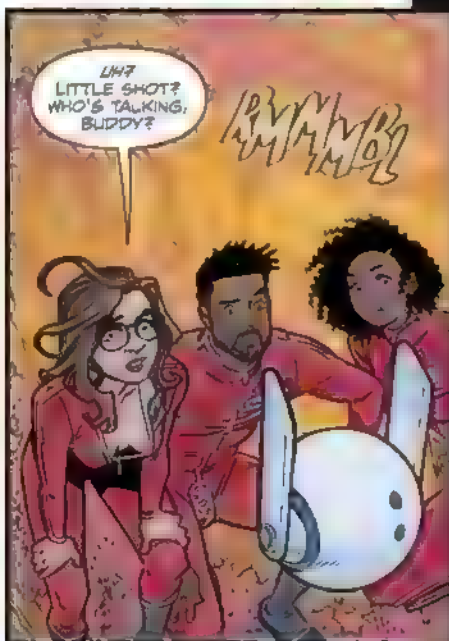
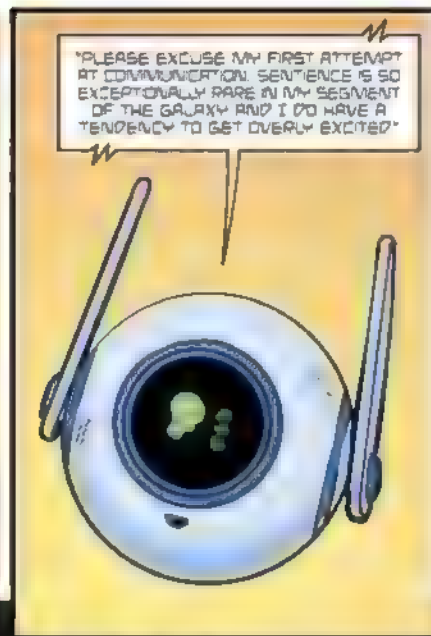
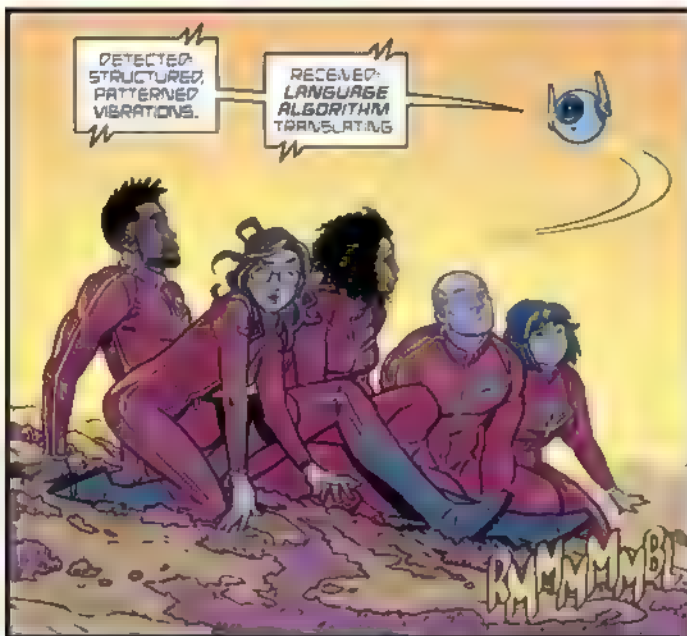
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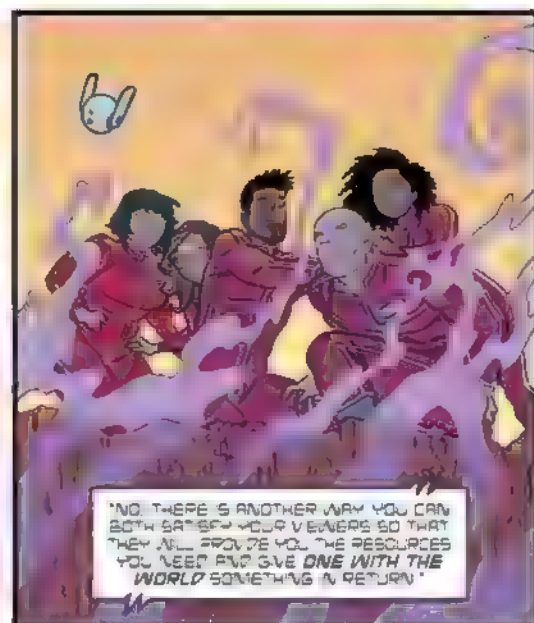
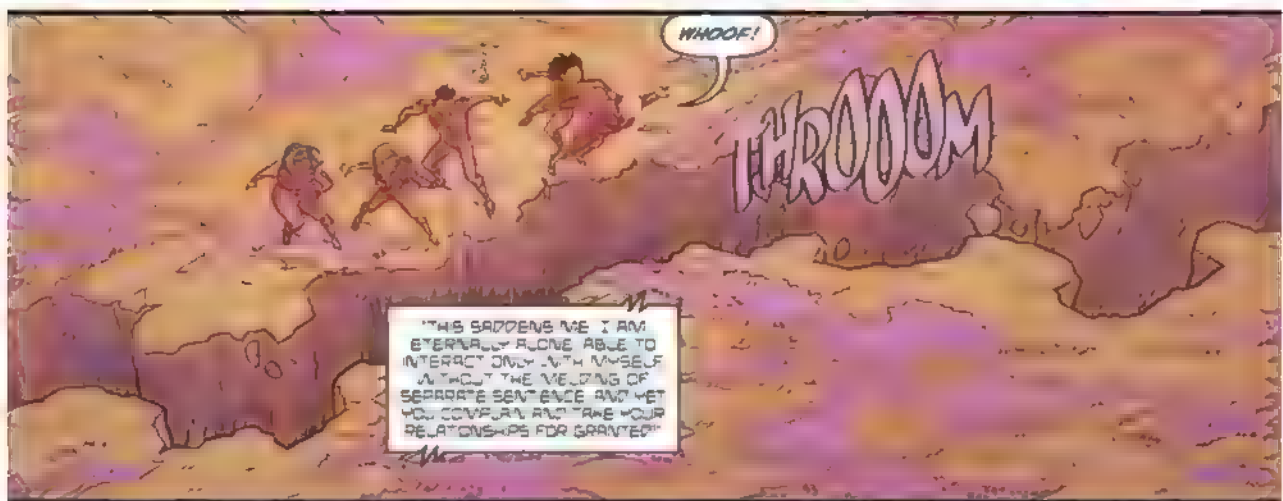
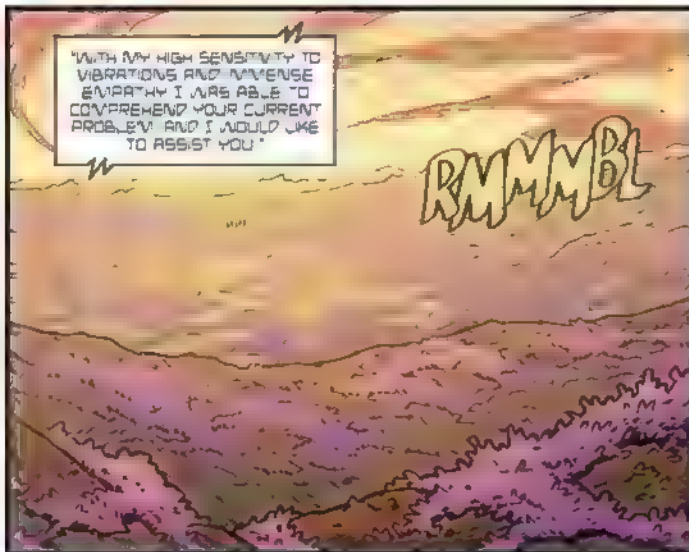


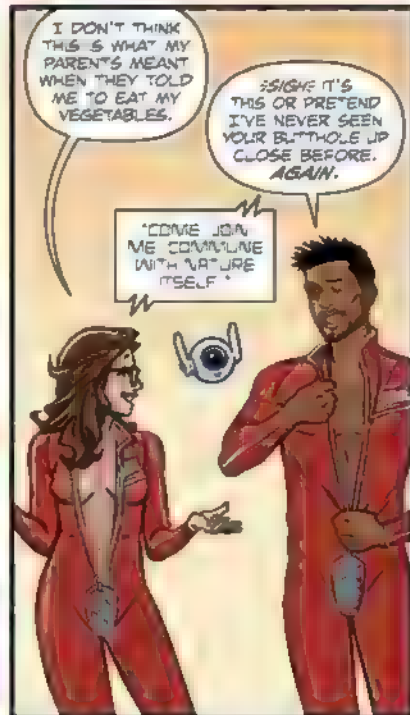
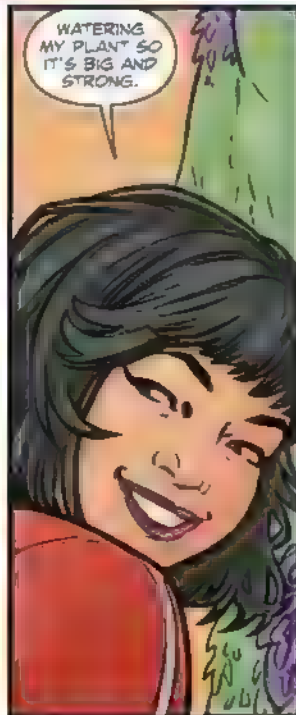
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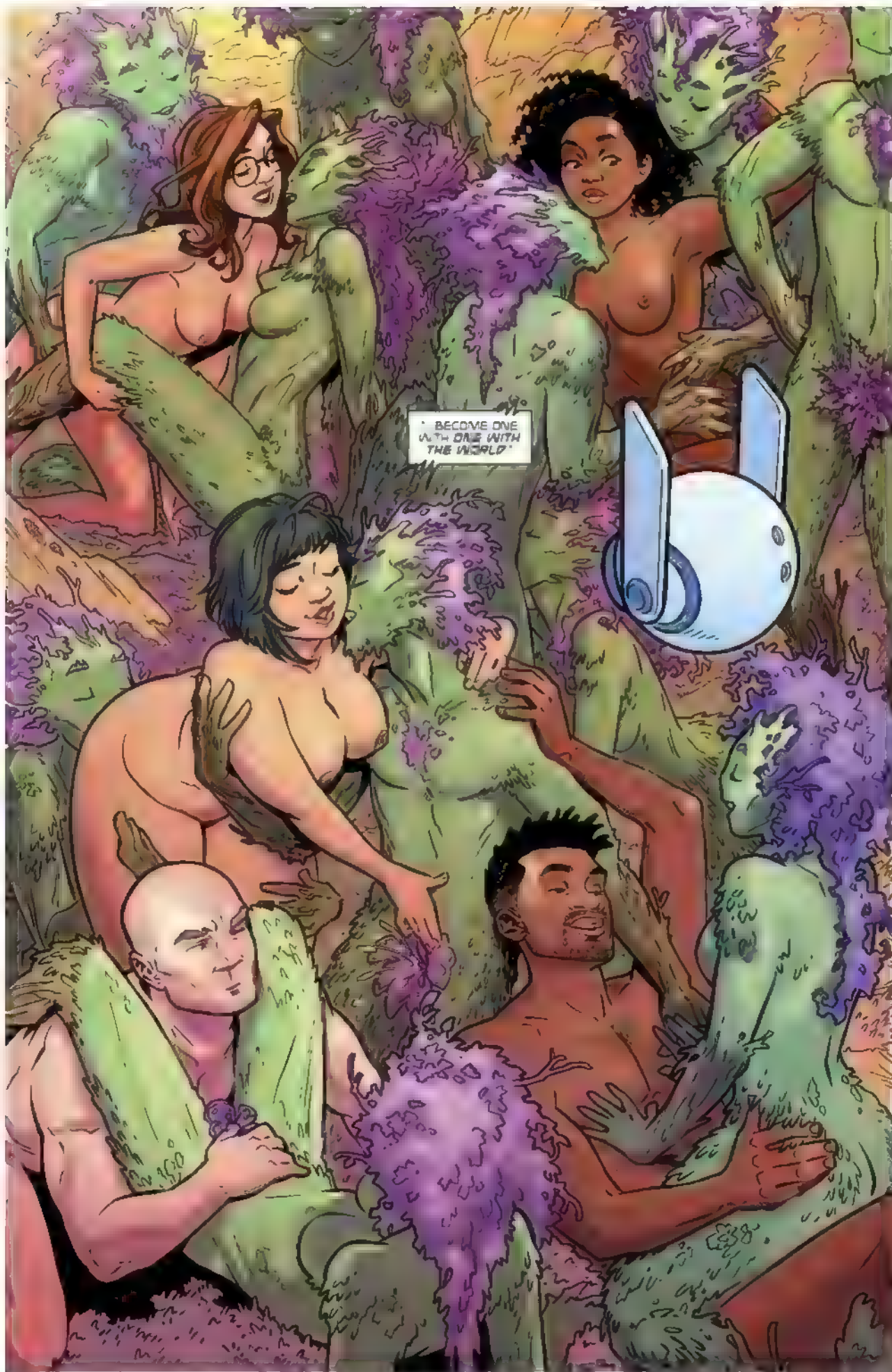
BE CAREFUL, LIL' SHOT!

NICE PLANET, OMAR! GREAT CHOICE!

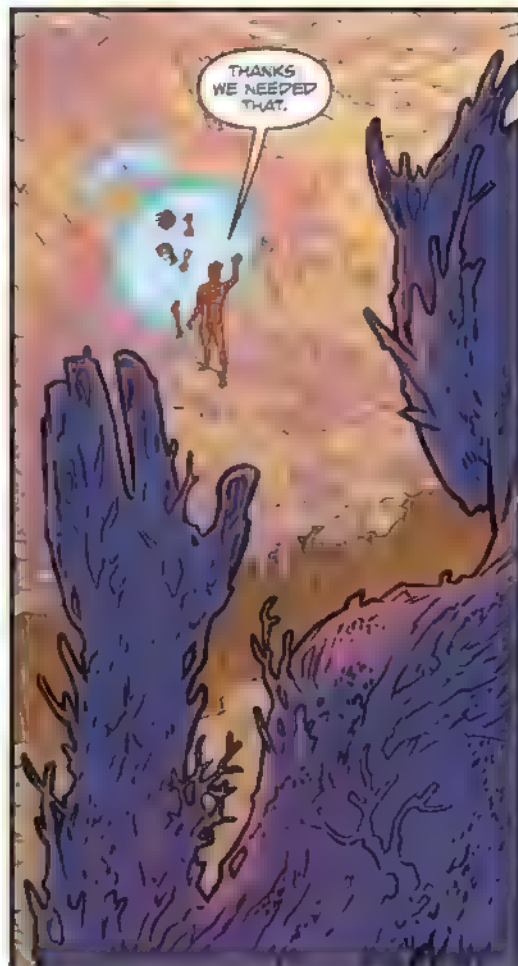
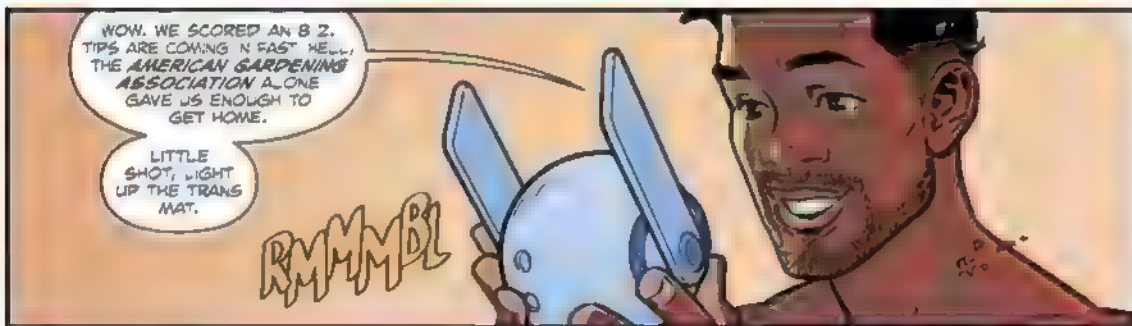
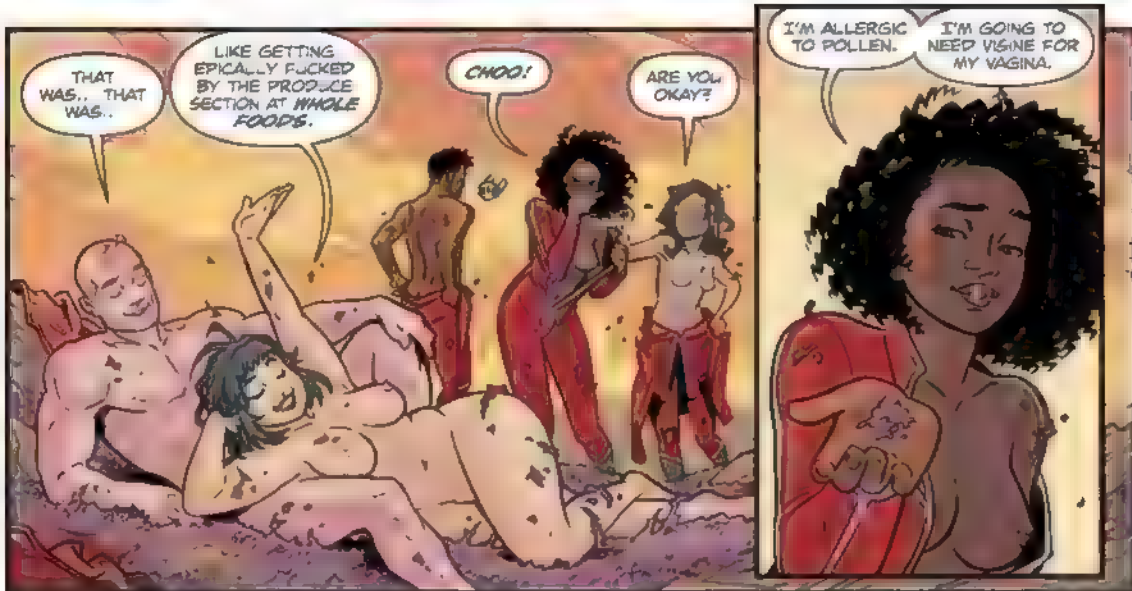


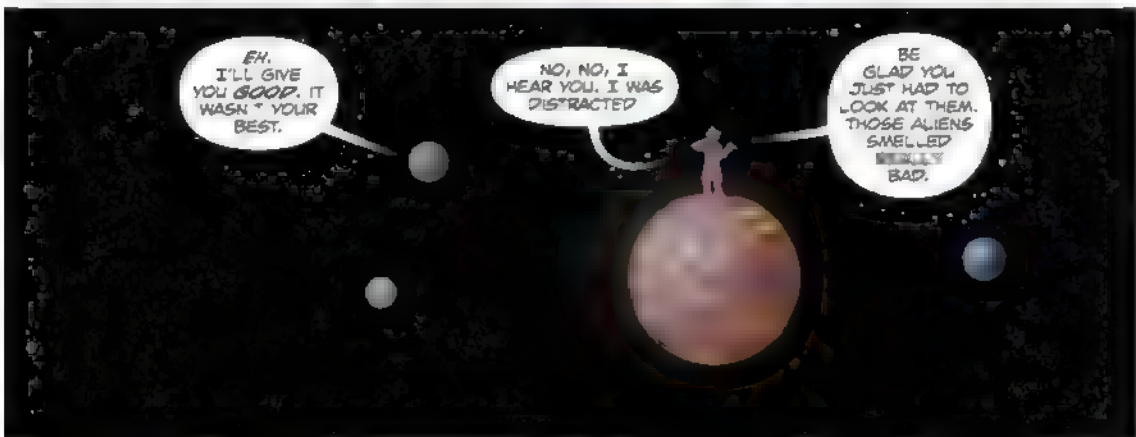
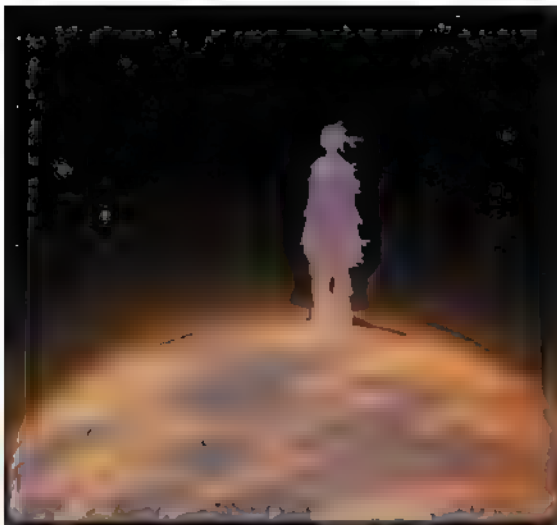






BECOME ONE
WITH ONE WITH
THE WORLD.





Sierra Mae

Red Planet Seduction

THE COSMIC
ALLURE OF VOXXAI
UNVEILED AT
LAKE POWELL'S
MARS-LIKE
TERRAIN

Sierra Mae
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Samuel | Samuel@jones1.com





Embarking on the cosmic journey "Red Planet Seduction," the enchanting allure of VOXXAi is unveiled against the backdrop of Lake Powell's Mars-like terrain. As the sun dips below the horizon, casting an otherworldly glow upon the red-hued cliffs and sparkling waters, the atmosphere becomes charged with an energy that transcends earthly boundaries. This celestial setting, reminiscent of the Red Planet itself, sets the stage for an extraordinary experience where the cosmic and terrestrial seamlessly converge. Amidst the majestic landscape of Lake Powell, the unveiling of VOXXAi unfolds, promising a fusion of cosmic wonder and earthly beauty that defies the ordinary.

As the sun dips below the horizon, painting the Martian glow on the canvas of Lake Powell, a promise unfolds. Amidst this breathtaking tapestry, we delve into the story of VOXXAi — a catalyst for positive change on both personal and collective levels. It represents a new way of connecting, communicating, and collaborating.

Sierra Mae explains, "Lake Powell in Arizona is simply mind-blowing. I've been lucky enough to soak in its beauty, and let me tell you, it's like stepping into another world — Mars, maybe. The water sparkles like crazy in the desert sun, throwing back the colors of the massive cliffs that surround it. Standing there, you can feel this chill breeze that somehow brings a sense of peace. It's like the lake is whispering, inviting you to chill out and take it all in."

As a woman, being around Lake Powell is like tapping into some serious girl power. The sunlight plays on the water, making this awesome

picture that reflects the strength and resilience we all have. Whether you're cruising around or finding a quiet spot in one of the coves, there's this amazing feeling of freedom that comes from being surrounded by Lake Powell's timeless beauty. It's not just a cool place; it's like a refuge where being a woman fits perfectly with the awesomeness of nature, leaving you with memories that stick around long after you've left."

As the cosmic spectacle unfolds at Lake Powell's Mars-like expanse, VOXXAi's transcendence movement takes an alluring turn with the exclusive unveiling of VOXXNOIR. This seductive lingerie, swimwear, and resort wear line, crafted from the finest Italian fabrics, epitomizes sensuality and sophistication in every stitch. The shoot and behind-the-scenes filming unfold amidst the breathtaking backdrop, where the allure of VOXXNOIR meets the mystique of Lake Powell.

VOXXNOIR's creations redefine elegance, promising a sensory experience like never before. The fabrics, caressing the skin with an unmatched softness, evoke a sense of empowerment and confidence. These creations become more than just attire; they embody a celebration of femininity, inviting women worldwide to embrace their allure.

As the channels within VOXXAi open their doors to showcase women from diverse corners of the globe adorned in VOXXNOIR, the vision of a connected and empowered community takes center stage. Beyond fashion, these channels become a testament to the strength, beauty, and diversity of women everywhere. VOXXNOIR, in tandem with VOXXAi, invites

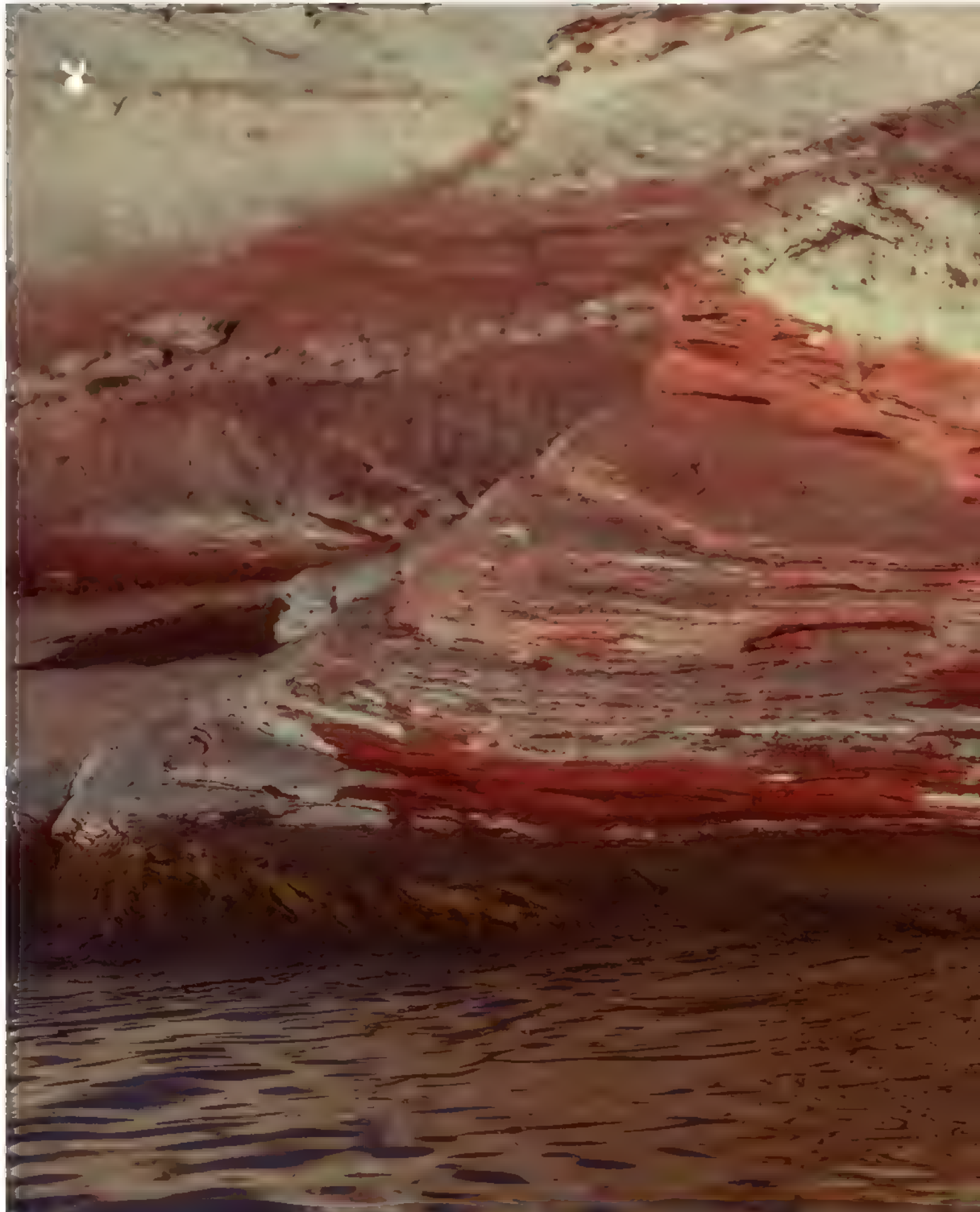
the world to explore a space where elegance, technology, and empowerment converge, creating a global celebration of feminine allure that transcends boundaries.

"Embracing the VOXXNOIR collection has been an absolute game-changer for me. Every piece exudes this irresistible blend of sensuality and sophistication that I haven't found anywhere else. The fine Italian fabrics make you feel like you're wrapped in luxury, and honestly, I can't get enough of it. What I love most is its versatility — from lingerie that makes you feel confident and empowered to swimwear and resort wear perfect for any occasion."

Since trying out VOXXNOIR, I haven't looked back. It's become my go-to for shoots and, truth be told, even when I'm not in front of the camera. There's this magnetic allure to the collection that's hard to resist. The fact that I find myself reaching for VOXXNOIR in my everyday life speaks volumes. It's more than just clothing; it's a statement of confidence and power.

I can confidently recommend the VOXXNOIR collection to any woman who wants to feel not just sexy but empowered. It's a celebration of femininity, and I haven't experienced anything quite like it. Here's to embracing our allure and feeling fabulous in every moment!" — Sierra Mae, Model and Enthusiastic Advocate of VOXXNOIR.com













Hey fabulous people! Sierra here with some incredible news you won't want to miss. VOXXAI isn't just an app, it's a game-changer for anyone looking to level up in life. Picture a community where authenticity reigns supreme, thanks to AI moderating negativity. It's a space filled with real, genuine people sharing uplifting, positive, and valuable content.

But wait, there's more! VOXXAI is your ticket to a journey focused on strong monetization. Dive into the Affiliate Marketing Trend, earning first-level commissions and matching bonuses. The largest EV Charging Map is built-in, ad-free. Sell bookings for your home EV power, boosting your income immediately.

For coaches, this app is a game-changer. Host local and online events, let users book you privately, and monetize HD Subscription Channels. Make them free or set any value – it's all about your preferences. There's even an export URL for each channel to direct traffic to your existing Spotify or similar page.

In the world of VOXXAI, models now have an extraordinary platform to showcase stunning content and monetize it. Step into subscription channels where your artistry remains exclusive, and here's the game-changer – it's entirely unsolicited. Curate content for each subscriber tier, engage with their suggestions through private group lives, and discreet billing ensures a seamless experience.

Exciting twist – become a VOXXNOIR ROYAL, featured at "008 VN ROYALS." Enter the search, follow, submit your HD intro for approval, and showcase. This community integrates into the CLUB VOXX NOIR Gentleman's Society, offering opportunities for new subscribers.

Act now to secure your three-digit token number on VOXXAI's private platform. Be the trailblazer with first-gen commissions, bonuses, and lead the conversation in the feed. Your moment is here – seize it at VOXXAI.com!

Don't miss out on this exponential growth opportunity. Download the VOXXAI app today and start building your monetization. Trust me; you won't regret being part of this exciting journey. Cheers to your future success! -SM



VOXX002 com **Sierra Mae**
VOXX007 com **CLUB VOXX NOIR**
VOXX008 com **VOXX NOIR ROYALS**
VOXX069 com **Electra Playmates**



Volvo is a Swedish car manufacturer. The company was founded in 1927 and is now a part of the Volvo Group. The company is known for its safety and reliability. The Volvo 0002 is a special edition car. It is a white Volvo car with the license plate 'VOLVO 0002'. The car is parked on a beach at sunset. The woman is standing in front of the car. She is wearing a white dress and high heels. She is posing with one hand on her hip and the other near her head. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky.



The DOPE TUTOR ANSWERS

Why Does Weed
Make Food Taste
So Good?

BY ANDREW DEANGELO

ILLUSTRATION BY RICHARD A. CHANCE



THC-heightened senses can make the munchies a true pleasure to remember

My first food-and-weed epiphany was a quasi-religious experience—one that happened more than three decades ago. I was in high school and had smoked a joint on the walk over to my best friend's house, arriving quite stoned. In the grip of the munchies, I asked him if there was anything I could eat. He told me to help myself to the pots of Ethiopian food upstairs in the kitchen.

Aromas washed over me like a tidal wave as I entered the kitchen: berbere, garlic, ginger, chili. The array of fragrant spices flooding my senses made me want all of whatever was creating the wonderful smells. A bit of drool slid from the corner of my mouth, which I found hilarious. I began to laugh as I tried to figure out where the plates and utensils were kept in this unfamiliar kitchen. This was no easy task as each drawer yielded the wrong results. To me this was hysterical. Tears streamed down my face from laughing so hard. Somehow I managed to find the

proper gear and opened the first lid on the stove. As I peered into a pot of chicken legs and a whole egg drowning in a curry-like sauce, I smelled the food in a way I never had before. The scent lingered in my nostrils; I lingered above the pots. I must've stood there for 10 minutes smelling the food and laughing out loud.

Then it was time to eat.

I decided to take my time and really enjoy it. The memory of that first bite is seared into my mind. I could taste each flavor, each spice. I noticed the texture in my mouth, the heat, the chili burning my tongue, the chicken falling off the bone. It tasted so good, like the best thing I had ever eaten. I began to wonder if my mother had ever cooked anything so spectacular. It was a moment of pure pleasure.

My friend came upstairs as I was eating. Whoever made this food needed to open a restaurant right away, I told him. That's when he noticed my bloodshot eyes and busted me for being high as a kite. After a long laugh, he then schooled me on the proper way to eat this cuisine, showing me how to use the spongy injera bread and my fingers to scoop up everything. We sat in silence and ate, and I swear I thought I saw Jesus. I think I even stood up when I was done, applauding and saying "Bravo!" My friend made sure to usher my stoned ass out of his house before his parents came home. On my walk back, I noticed my senses were still heightened; I could still smell and taste the delicious flavors and spices.

That meal left a deep impression. 37 years later, it's clear as a bell. And they say stoners can't remember anything. On the contrary, science says it's perfectly normal for me to remember that THC-enhanced meal with such clarity.

When cannabis hits your brain, a lot happens to your appetite. Two recent studies conducted with mice, one in the United States and the other in Europe, tell us a lot. The European study reveals that the olfactory area of the brain becomes more active when THC is in your system. This explains why the smell of the food captured my attention all those years ago. In

WHEN CANNABIS HITS YOUR BRAIN, A LOT HAPPENS TO YOUR APPETITE.

fact, when I tap into that memory, I can still "smell" those scents wafting off the stovetop. It's because the weed made that area of my brain more sensitive—and smell, in general, stimulates appetite. When smell is enhanced, so is appetite, and so is the memory of smell and taste. That's why you can remember great meals over the years, even without any assistance from cannabis.

The American study reveals two opposing things that happen in a different part of the brain called the hypothalamus, which tells you when you're full and need to stop eating, among other things. THC appears to turn this function down or off, and also causes the release of dopamine, which can make you feel hungry. That's why the munchies can strike even after you've indulged in a big dinner. Hours after the main meal, you may find yourself getting that third plate of turkey this Thanksgiving.

This year, as we forgo large gatherings and set more intimate tables, let's spark up some cannabis together and blow some smoke at the Zoom screen. You may find yourself slowing down, taking time to smell your meal, marveling at all the different tastes you can experience simultaneously—and maybe laughing out loud until tears of joy stream down your face. What better way to settle into the holidays?

Tune in next month for more about cannabis, pleasure and why weed can be the best gift of all.



License *to* *Wed*

Queer couples rush
to the altar amid
the growing threat
to marriage equality

BY LAUREN ROWELLO

PHOTO BY HAPPY STOCK PHOTO

Tonia Castaneda-Rose and Jenna Rose met while working at a private school just a month before the pandemic hit their hometown of Palestine, Texas. The two women started dating in March 2020 just as Covid-19 cases climbed across the United States, and they later lost their jobs when their school closed permanently.

As a polyamorous couple, the pair's first month together was shared with other partners. Weeks into their relationship, Rose's previous long-term relationship ended abruptly and Castaneda-Rose's father died suddenly. "She and I held each other together during some of the hardest moments of our lives," Rose says. "We quickly bonded and grew together." By July, the couple started planning a wedding with a date set in 2022.

When conservative Amy Coney Barrett was confirmed to the Supreme Court, queer people started to worry about their futures. Barrett is only 48 years old, and her lifetime appointment sets her up to influence the lives of Americans for decades. Her confirmation solidified a strong six-to-three conservative majority on the court, and some of those conservative justices have already dissented on rulings that protect the rights of LGBTQ people.

Advocates point to Barrett's conservative Christian beliefs as a possible threat, noting her defense of the justices' marriage-equality dissents and her misgendering of trans people as proof that she might not respect and protect queer people. As an "originalist," she interprets the Constitution through the lens of those who wrote the document, without considering modern experiences or cultural shifts. Activists explain that those historical leaders did not understand or affirm the rights and freedoms of LGBTQ and marginalized people, underlining the dangers of using this perspective to interpret today's laws.

Barrett has already started hearing cases that will decide the fates of queer people, with a case about discrimination in the foster care system pending adjudication after oral arguments were heard November 4.

"We're concerned about other rights we might lose and what other discrimination might be legalized," Rose, 30, says. As a transgender woman in Texas, she says, it's challenging to look for a new position following her recent job loss. She fears that protections afforded to her by the recent ruling protecting LGBTQ people from employment discrimination could be revoked.

Marriage offers legal protections for couples who could experience discrimination. Castaneda-Rose, 23, hopes their legal union will safeguard her child, who is not biologically related to her wife. "If something were to happen to me, what would they do with our daughter?" she wonders.

Rose, an avid motorcyclist, says she's concerned about possible accidents and wants to guarantee that her partner can make decisions about her care and visit her in the hospital if there is an emergency. It is critical for transgender women to have an advocate in healthcare, she says. "It's very scary living in a world where there are constant threats to your rights, especially your basic right to medical care," she adds.

Rose and Castaneda-Rose reached out to Raynie Castaneda, a leader in the pagan community who planned to officiate their wedding ceremony, explaining their fear

"The message is: We exist. You can't legislate our existence away."

that they might not be able to wed if marriage equality is overturned. Castaneda, a pagan witch, invited them to a public ceremony she planned for queer couples in a town square in Tyler, Texas.

On Sunday, November 15, five couples, including this pair, were married as an act of protest and solidarity. "The message is: We exist," Castaneda says. "You can't legislate our existence away."

Rose explains that living in a deeply religious part of east Texas comes with risks for openly queer people. "Hate crimes in Texas and political tension make queer people feel more unsafe than in other areas of the U.S.," she says. "Living here, you have to be prepared to defend yourself—philosophically, politically or physically."

A Christian group walked throughout the space during the wedding ceremony, praying aloud and reading from the Bible. "I've had threats and harassment," Rose says. "We've been told that we're evil for subjecting our children to our unholy union."

Rick Taylor, of Philadelphia, is no stranger to standing up for LGBTQ rights when opposed by religious institutions. In 2013, he married Bill Gatewood in a ceremony that protested the firing of a Pennsylvania pastor from the United Methodist Church for officiating his son's marriage to a man. The rite was performed at his church in Philadelphia by 65 religious leaders, including 50 Methodist pastors who risked losing their credentials for performing the ceremony. Marriage equality wasn't protected by the Supreme Court until 2015, so the couple had to wait more than a year for their marriage to be legally recognized.

Taylor, 62, lost Gatewood to heart disease, and then began dating Roberto Soler, 52, in 2018. As the Senate was about to begin Barrett's confirmation hearings, he asked Soler to marry him, seeking peace of mind in case marriage equality is reversed. "I decided I'm not going to give them a chance to tell me I can't do this again," Taylor says. "They didn't get to push me into a box the first time, and I'm not going to give them an opportunity to try it a second time. If they're going to change the rules, we need to get a jump on it."

Taylor says this relationship is different from his last. His late husband experienced rampant homophobia growing up, which led to internalized feelings of shame. "I spent our entire lives together trying to get him to understand that [being gay] is not a bad thing," Taylor says. He notes that American culture seemed to be becoming more affirming of queer people and more supportive of those with marginalized



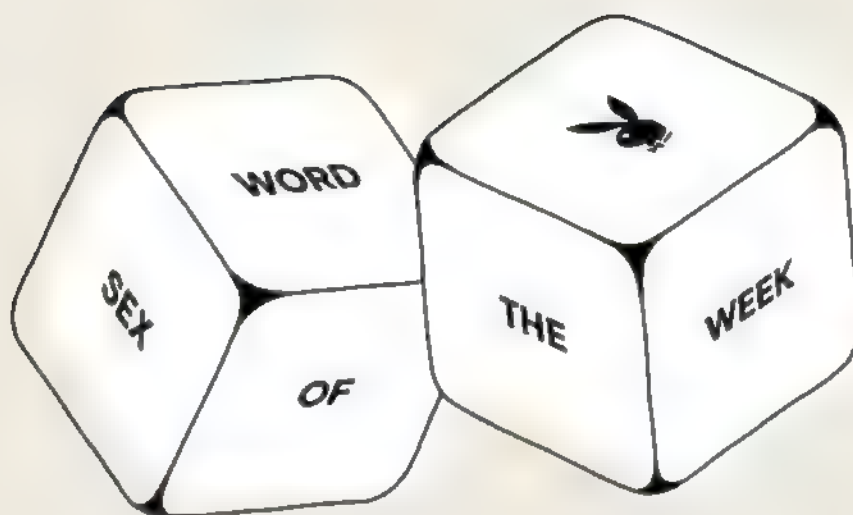
experiences in recent years—until Trump gave a platform to those who oppose such progress. “I was beginning to see things get better, and then I started to watch it slip away,” he says. “I just want all people—gay and lesbian and transgender and immigrant—to have the same rights as every other American.” He says this year’s close presidential election demonstrates that so many people in the U.S. don’t hold those same beliefs.

Taylor and Soler are currently planning an intimate wedding to be officiated by his pastor, Robin Hynicka, who presided over his first marriage. The pair plans to wed in mid-December with a quiet ceremony at their home in Manayunk, a Philadelphia neighborhood just a few miles from Arch Street United Methodist Church, the site of Taylor’s first wedding. He says marriage will offer him peace of mind.

Castaneda echoes his sentiment. “Marriage protects families, full stop,” she says. “It protects spouses and loved ones—medically, monetarily and spiritually.”

“I decided I’m not going to give them a chance to tell me I can’t do this again.”





Vanilla

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

vanilla (*adj*) a term used to describe any form of sexual intercourse that meets the conventional standards set by society

Rachel and Taylor put away the tools and toys and decided to go for some cozy vanilla sex since they hadn't done missionary in a long time

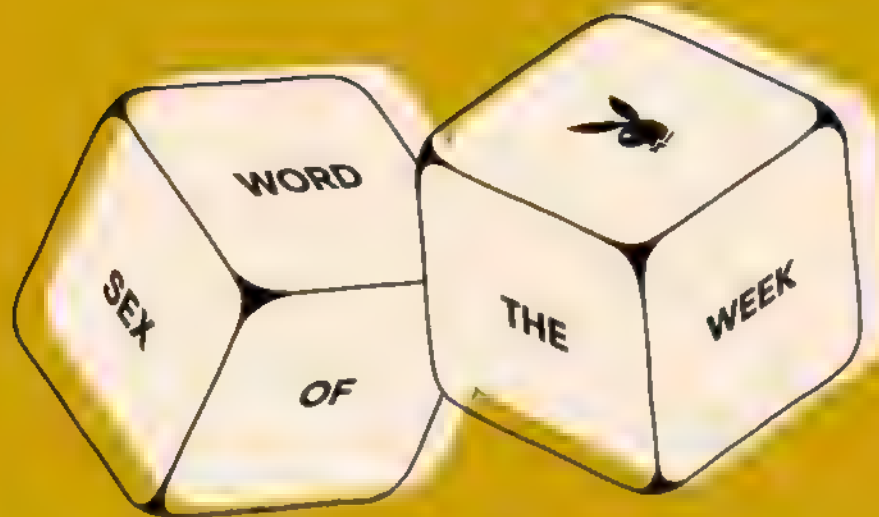
There is no incorrect way to enjoy sex. Any consensual encounter that brings pleasure and connection is worthwhile. That said, vanilla sex, or sex that can be regular ol' missionary with the lights turned off, has been unfairly maligned in our sexual landscape. The definition of vanilla is subjective, but it's generally characterized as traditional, simple, non-acrobatic sex—no handcuffs, swings, rubber suits or extra people.

Vanilla is typically hurled as an insult to indicate someone is basic in bed. In actuality, there is nothing wrong with the vanilla label. The term grew out of the BDSM community to differentiate sex that happened outside of the kink world. It was meant to be a harmless descriptor with no shade behind it. As the label went mainstream, however, it picked up a negative connotation. Combine that with the ubiquity of hardcore porn and franchises like *Fifty Shades*, and vanilla folks begin to feel like their sex lives are missing something.

It can be assumed a significant chunk of the population likes vanilla sex—thus the name—so if you're a vanilla sex-haver, you're in good company!

Although sexual experimentation can teach you new things about yourself and your partner, there are advantages to conventional exploits as well. For some, vanilla sex can feel more romantic and emotionally comforting.

The big takeaway is not to compare your sex life to the sex lives of others. Sex is a wide-open, choose-your-own-adventure book, and there are no rules for how to get off.



Mukbang

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

ILLUSTRATION BY
KATIE BAILIE

If your libidinous mind can imagine it, there's probably already a term for it

mukbang (*n*) a live broadcast during which the host eats copious amounts of food while interacting with an online audience

Lee made roughly \$6,000 a month doing her spicy ramen mukbang on Twitch.

In honor of Thanksgiving tomorrow, we wanted to do a food-focused fetish for this week's sex word. Since we already did reederism, we decided to discuss the pleasure of mukbanging instead. For those of you not familiar with the internet fad, mukbang is inhaling huge amounts of food on a live broadcast platform such as Twitch or YouTube. Mukbang, a portmanteau of the Korean words muk-ja ("let's eat") and bang-song ("broadcast"), started growing in popularity as early as 2010.

If you tune in to a video, you'll likely see someone sitting at a table with a ridiculous amorgasbord and then ravenously consuming everything before them. A mukbang dish can literally be anything. Giant-sized bowls of noodles are a popular choice, as are dumplings, fried chicken, barbecue, [meatloaf](#) and [fast food](#).

Why do people enjoy watching this? The reasons vary. For some who might be lonely and lacking social interaction, mukbang imitates the feeling of communal dining. For others, yes, duh, of course it's a sex thing. ASMR, which is basically arousal at specific auditory or visual stimuli, can be triggered by mukbang videos. Although mukbang is not inherently sexual, the loud slurping, exaggerated exhaling and reddened faces can all be turn-ons if your brain is wired a certain way. People will pay good money just for the privilege of watching an attractive person binge-eat their way through a plate of atomic wings.

So when you're chowing down on Turkey Day, remember that the bird could potentially be paying for itself if you just bit record.

Candice Morningstar















How did you get started in the modeling industry? When I was 21 I had a photoshoot for fun which led to work and it just escalated from there.

Can you tell us about your first modeling gig? I was hired as a promo girl promoting these strong bourbon drinks walking around in booty shorts and knee-high boots at the speedway car show! I spent a lot of time posing on cars which led to live modeling at other expos that year! I was very under-prepared and was so nervous but I had so much fun.

What is the most exciting project you've worked on so far? This year I was asked to take part in a calendar called Motorbabe Calendar for 2024 where I was touring as a showgirl. It was amazing seeing such cool cars and working with professionals producing amazing photos. I was blown away.

I've also had amazing opportunities to fly to cities around the world for photography and modeling. I just got back from Indonesia for the Playboy Calendar shoot.

What's your secret to staying in great shape and maintaining a healthy lifestyle? I juggle a lot including working half my time in a busy emergency department as a nurse so keeping active balanced with rest! And coffee. Lots of coffee! On my days off I walk my dog do yoga, and workout either at the gym or at home by the pool.

What advice do you have for aspiring models trying to break into the industry? Keep pushing. Take every rejection as a learning opportunity. Be authentic. Be professional. Don't take anything personally. Become your own brand and be proud of the small successes early. I was always so hard on myself.

Are there any models or fashion icons who inspire you? Historically, Bridget Bardot and Marilyn Monroe. I love strong blonde sex symbols with great fashion taste! I'm a big Pamela Anderson fan too. Her Playboy cover will forever be iconic.

How do you stay up-to-date with the latest fashion trends and industry developments? Mostly Instagram and when I travel, wandering around the locals to see what's going on. I always love the fashion in Soho, you might see someone in denim shorts, you might see someone in a leather bikini with an orange coat and boots! Either way, it's fantastic to be able to express what you like! I also love to sew so I craft a few things of my own here and there.

Do you have a dream project or campaign you'd love to be a part of one day? My dream project is to set up my own brand and clothing line full-time. I love outrageous designs and anything mid-century modern futuristic space chic. I spend a lot of time doing graphic design drawing, and designing outfits to match my go-go boots.

How do you balance your professional career with your personal life and relationships? With difficulty! I'm a workaholic and when I get fixated on an idea, I might stay up for 20 hours at a time until I get where I need to be. It makes it difficult but I let loose playing poker and drinking cock-

tails when I get the chance.

What is the most valuable lesson you've learned in your career as a model? Different is good! What makes you unique fun and professional sets you apart from the crowd. Being authentically yourself makes people want to choose you for the job. I love pushing boundaries.

Can you share some of your favorite beauty and fashion tips? Wig glue on thigh-high stockings for long shoots, performances, and shows! They won't fall down no matter what. Wearing SPF50 sunscreen even when it's cloudy- protecting your skin in Australia is so important.

How do you handle the pressure of constantly being in the spotlight? I'm recognized in my home city which is lovely. On-tour is fun, I enjoy it. I never travel solo so it's easier with people around me when I don't feel like engaging with the public.

What are your go-to fashion staples or must-have items in your wardrobe? I have a few pairs of Go-Go boots which I LOVE and it's so easy to make a cool retro vibe with short dresses, long jackets, and cool boots. Depending on my location, at home it's tropical so I spend all my time in a bikini mostly.

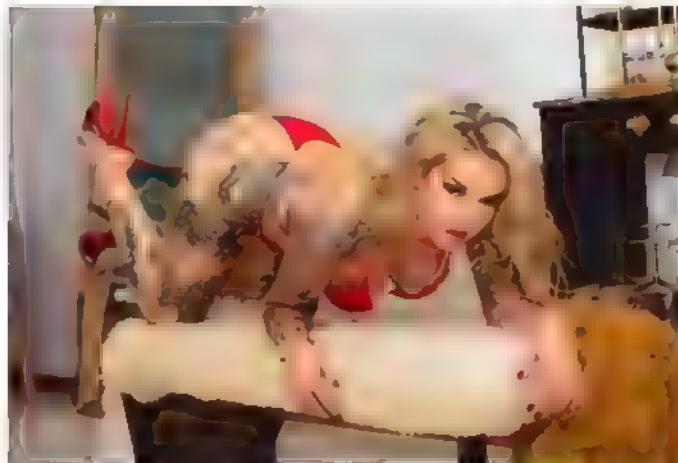
What role has social media played in your modeling career, and how do you engage with your followers? Instagram and TikTok are a huge part of brand management and your career these days. I am on Instagram a lot. I'm also on the Playboy Creator app which adds another element of time to my day but I love 1:1 messaging with my followers and going live, holding competitions to win things. Like most recently, the cheesiest pickup line wins a free calendar. That was so much fun.

What are your long-term goals and aspirations in the modeling industry? I love creating content, I have certifications in visual media, graphic design, and multimedia, and I love creating short film content on reels which is a bit different and utilizes professional photographers and we have created and directed some great stuff. I'd love to do more of this. I'm not ready to slow down anytime soon.

Can you share some upcoming projects or ventures that your fans can look forward to? I'll also be touring again next year in the northern hemisphere. My brand is having a huge launch in 2024 of my custom-designed clothing (not mass-produced in a factory somewhere). I'll be announcing the date for this soon. People can head to CandiceMorningstar.com when my line is available. The concept is about sustainable slow fashion, hand-painted, printed, and pressed

items, fabric designed by me, all with extra bonus stuff in the bag which can range from naughty polaroids to nude posters.

Thanks so much for your time, Where can our readers follow you on social to stay updated on what you're up to? Thank you so much! I keep everyone updated on Instagram and on my website @candicemorningstar and candicemorningstar.com. People can slide into my DM's, I promise to answer.





Playboy Interview

Jim Carrey

A candid conversation with Hollywood's most serious-minded funny guy about spirituality, drugs, denial and how "The Truman Show" became reality

BY MICHAEL FLEMING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID ROSE

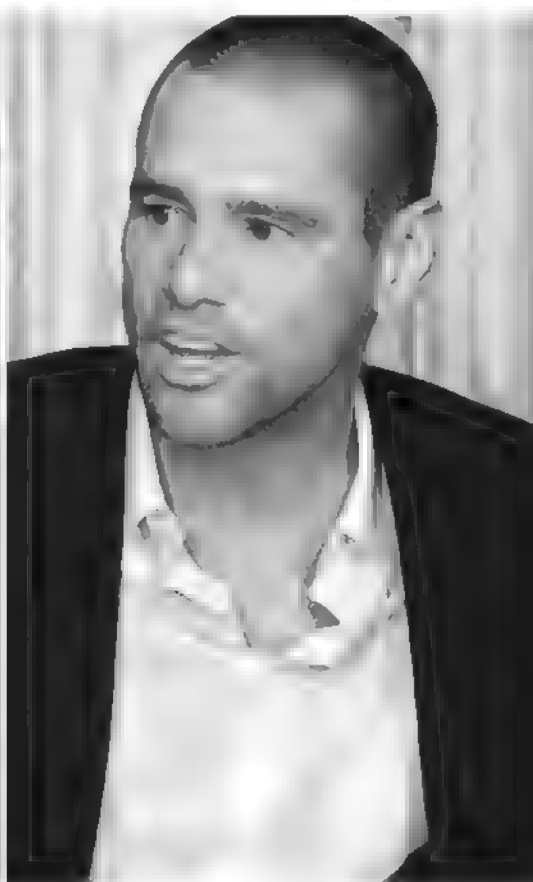
With his head and his face bearing equal amounts of stubble, Jim Carrey arrives at his production company's office. He has just shaved his skull for a new role, and dressed in a black suit and white shirt he looks like a happy, prosperous monk. But the name on the door—Pit Bull Productions—reveals far more about Carrey's true nature

Born in Toronto, Carrey had an une-

ventful childhood as the son of an accountant and a homemaker—until Dad lost his job and the family was left homeless and miserable. Carrey dropped out of school in 10th grade and worked at menial jobs to help out. He found better pay doing impressions on the stand-up comedy circuit. His harmless, permanently smiling persona translated to roles in such films as *Peggy Sue Got Married* and the short-lived

TV series *The Duck Factory*

The earlier hard times, however, had instilled anger and an edge in Carrey that eventually came out. Mindful that his father had been fired from a seemingly safe job, Carrey tossed out the mainstream act that had him opening for Rodney Dangerfield. He replaced it with a caustic, manic persona who went onstage without a set routine and punished his audience until



it responded—sometimes with laughter, sometimes with debris. Keenen Ivory Wayans saw the edge as a strong match for his envelope-pushing Fox sketch show *In Living Color* and made Carrey the lone white male cast member in 1990.

Carrey scored a surprise hit as Ace Ventura, Pet Detective and followed that with *The Mask* in 1994, another blockbuster, which instantly drove his price from \$500,000 to \$7 million a film. When Robin Williams vacillated on playing the Riddler in *Batman Forever*, Carrey jumped into the green suit and had his first global hit. Next, a record \$20 million to star in the 1996 film *The Cable Guy*.

Hardly content to be a rich guy who makes faces and talks out of his ass, Carrey rolled the dice again. His edgy *Cable Guy* villain darkened the film's tone enough to horrify studio execs (and audiences, who stayed away in droves). Still, the performance helped Carrey take a step toward serious films. In *The Truman Show* he played the unwitting star of a 24-hours-a-day reality TV show. Carrey then played quirky comic Andy Kaufman in *Man on the Moon*.

The problem: Those serious turns seriously underperformed at the box office. In fact, 2001's *The Majestic* was enough of a bomb for people to start writing Carrey's career epitaph. The death notices were shelved when Carrey put on his funny hat again and delivered last year's top-grossing comedy, *Bruce Almighty*. What's an ambitious megastar to do? For Carrey the answer is to take the serious route yet again in his new film, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, a surreal drama about memory erasing that was written by Charlie Kaufman, architect of *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation*.

Michael Fleming sat down with Carrey just as he began working on the role of Count Olaf, the signature villain in the film *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, an adaptation of Daniel Handler's kid-book series. The twice-divorced (most recently from actress Lauren Holly), now single Carrey was clearly getting into character. He seemed tightly coiled, partly because he doesn't like doing interviews and partly because he had decided to explain certain aspects of his personal life that he'd never talked about before—and he wasn't sure how his fans might react.

PLAYBOY: You've been working around the clock on your new film, and you've just shaved your head. Are you feeling overwhelmed?

CARREY: Not today. I just came off the beach in Malibu, near my house. It was the most beautiful day, except for that inevitable paparazzi triangulation.

PLAYBOY: Your *Truman Show* character has no privacy. Now, with the paparazzi following you, the same has happened to you.

CARREY: This country is getting us ready for *The Truman Show*. It's happening. I feel a little scared and sad. They're slowly desensitizing us to where there's a video camera on every street corner. Shows on TV are getting more like, "Ha! What a stupid guy, that Joe Schmo or whoever he is."

PLAYBOY: The *Truman Show* seemed cautionary in 1998 but now seems prophetic. On *The Joe Schmo Show*, everybody was an actor except the unaware contestant. *Joe Millionaire's* contestants were duped into falling in love with a phony millionaire.

CARREY: It's all unbelievably cruel. I believe in making fun of things that deserve to be made fun of—lies, arrogance. These are things you want to rip down as a comedian. But when you take a guy who's a good-hearted human and you just go "Woo, woo, woo" behind his head, it's cruel.

PLAYBOY: Even though they gave him a hundred grand?

CARREY: A hundred grand means nothing. What are you buying—his humiliation and misery? It feels as if we're just desensitizing people to the point where it will be all right to take a baby and do whatever you want with it. Or to kill somebody on camera.

PLAYBOY: Meanwhile, celebrities get more and more coverage. How do you feel when you see an E! show consisting totally of people like yourself being stalked by the paparazzi?

CARREY: Unacceptable. Way over the edge, man. That channel is now eating its young.

PLAYBOY: What do you say when they ask for an interview?

CARREY: I don't do it.

PLAYBOY: What about the argument that it's the price of being rich and famous?

CARREY: I don't think that argument holds water. We should respect the people who entertain us and make us feel good—unless

I'm acting like an idiot, which I'm not. I know they justify it in their heads, but it can't make them feel good. Unless they're drunk or stoned and completely fogging over their feelings, I know that in their private moments, when they're lying in bed staring at the ceiling, they can't feel good about it. Taking is taking and giving is giving. Period. There will be a reckoning in their lives.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean?

CARREY: There will be some kind of unexplainable disease, something that happens in your life that makes you go, "Why

me?" And I'm here to tell you, it's because of the choices you made.

PLAYBOY: So you believe in karma?

CARREY: Absolutely, without a doubt. But this isn't karma, this is the truth eating you alive. You can justify things all you want, but every human being knows the truth. To follow someone around with your lens like a little sneak—it hurts your spirit on this planet.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel this strongly because you see yourself as a victim?

CARREY: I just feel it as a human being. I'm always looking at myself. I'm in no way perfect, but I'm always challenging myself to try to be better—in what I eat and what I read. I've always thought that a higher level is possible, and I'm always looking for it.

PLAYBOY: When you played a guy with a split personality in *Me, Myself & Irene*, advocacy groups complained that you belittled the mentally ill. Isn't everyone guilty of insensitivity, even you?

CARREY: I wasn't trying to be insensitive at all. To me it was like a cartoon. I don't want anybody to be hurt by what I do. If that in some way hurt somebody, I'd feel terrible. But it wasn't intentional. Maybe that's the difference. I was being funny.

PLAYBOY: Do you understand the appeal of E! and other celebrity coverage?

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u get up and make a triple-

CARREY: I've never been a person with a lot of onus on the things I do.

PLAYBOY: You own a house in the city, and you have a life fairly simple. I have a life fairly simple. I have a life fairly simple. But it mainly saves me a lot of trouble. I have a life fairly simple. But it mainly saves me a lot of trouble. I have a life fairly simple. But it mainly saves me a lot of trouble.

PERESBY: Your own
that save stress?
CARREY: Not having t

up that gave you comfort. all that is involved with
dairy, I don't smoke ciga- in my peace of mind. I

place so that I can go there when I'm 90.

an experiment, you know?
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my own experiment, and my hobby Psychology and

When everybody wants to go say never, but if I was d

JANUARY 2024

stood in a parking lot one night with Richard when he said, "I don't remember. I don't remember 40 years. I don't feel like I did it." And of course he did it. But that's the trick. You can do it without that stuff. You don't need it if creativity becomes your habit.

PLAYBOY: You're telling us that when you're in your big house alone you don't sometimes think, Screw it, I'm going to eat a gallon of ice cream?

CARREY: I have moments. But mostly I stay on my thing. I might have one day a week when I go off and have a glass of wine. I'm not completely dogmatic. But I keep honing this thing, this experiment. I fear that 90 percent of people are going to look at this and think, He's turning into a head case. I'm

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...ally decadent Honestly, I don't put a
...y life. I have things. I try to keep my

...l with the airports and the paparazzi,

support. It's a worth-while investment and about keeping myself in a healthy condition, man. I want to make it to 120 and run a 10k on the Great Wall of China.

might say that this is just a fad—that reviews for a movie you'll be pounding

that at McDonald's, I'd just get back



on my thing. I always have. Each time I go off and have one of those moments, it's a shorter span of time before I get back on my game. I don't promise anybody that I'm perfect. This is just my experiment.

PLAYBOY: Do your friends think, Gosh, Jim, you're not as much fun to hang with since you've turned into this Amish guy?

CARREY: I'm not as much fun for somebody who just wants to get wasted. I'm too confrontational to be around. But I don't judge people. You want to get wasted? I'll pass it to you. Here you go. You're your own judge. I don't want to judge anybody.

PLAYBOY: You came up alongside comics who became stars and were overcome by excess. After John Belushi became a movie star, people around him wouldn't let him have a bad moment even if it meant feeding him drugs.

CARREY: That's bullshit. It was his fault. John Belushi was a strong-willed motherfucker who'd kick your ass if you told him how to live. This is the mistake people make. Why couldn't someone talk to Elvis? Well, good luck. You were out the door if you did. It's this habit we have of shirking our responsibility to ourselves.

PLAYBOY: Many comics, such as Sam Kinison, seemed to work best when they were standing on the edge of a precipice.

CARREY: Sam was in total denial. He created a beast he couldn't get away from. I'm not saying that's ultimately what happened to him. But I know his struggle. He was always going back and forth. He'd come up to me and go, "Hey, Jim! We're drug-free Christians, man." We'd laugh because I was always trying to be straight and healthy. Then he'd go on Howard Stern, and Howard would say, "You know, you're not funny when you're not stoned." And he'd be right back doing it again. And this is the trouble—when you create the beast, you've got to be the beast, you know? I've got enough of a beast in me, man.

PLAYBOY: You are a perfectionist. Does this come at a high personal cost?

CARREY: Sometimes I hate it. Sometimes I don't want to do it. Especially things like this. I twist for three days before I sit down and talk to somebody like you. How do I try to speak my truth in an interview like this, to describe this trip that I'm on, without coming off like a self-important asshole?

PLAYBOY: You just say what's on your mind and take your chances. People will respond, or they won't.

CARREY: I'm trying to make sure that I'm a lion who likes to act like a monkey and not a monkey who likes to act like a lion. Don't ask me to explain it.

PLAYBOY: You shaved your head for Lemony Snicket. Why not put on a skin wig?

CARREY: I don't mind being a bit of a freak while I'm doing a movie. It gives me an excuse. It keeps life interesting. It scares me a little bit sometimes, because it puts me in a certain place that bangs up against where I want to be in my life spiritually. When you try to live a good life, one of the things you don't concentrate on is "How will I be self-loathing today? How will I hate God's creation?"

PLAYBOY: Did taking on the roles of Andy Kaufman and his alter ego, Tony Clifton, take a toll?

CARREY: Oddly enough, that one energized me. I was so lost in that character that I wasn't myself. I looked at it like this: Let's not be an actor doing Andy Kaufman's life story. Let's be Andy Kaufman coming back from the dead to do his life story. When I came out of it, it was as if I'd had a vacation from being Jim Carrey. I didn't think as I think, I didn't act as I act, I didn't make choices as Jim Carrey. I had gone off the planet. It was probably how you feel when you die—you just go, "Ahhh, what a rest."

PLAYBOY: It's remarkable that you could lose yourself so completely.

CARREY: It was actually spooky at the end. I had to sit for about three weeks and ask, "What do I believe again?" I lost track of my own likes and dislikes. I do know that it's possible to program your brain. It really is. I've done it my whole life. Everything I have is because of a constant kind of brainwashing that I've done to myself.

PLAYBOY: You have been prescient. You wrote a postdated \$10 million check to yourself when you were poor, and when the date came up you had the money to cover it. You told yourself you were going to be one of the five biggest actors in Hollywood, that every

major director would someday want to work with you.

CARREY: Is working with me

PLAYBOY: So you consider this approach to be pretty successful?

CARREY: The whole thing is all good brainwashing. Not "I'm going to do this," but rather "I am doing this." I've always said it in the present moment, as if it already exists. I may not be connected to it yet, but it exists. When people ask me about an Oscar, I try to be polite about it. But I've already won it. In my head I've won Best Actor.

PLAYBOY: For which role?

CARREY: I don't know what the role is. I want that to sur-

prise me. I'm not being arrogant. I don't have some sense of entitlement. It's just that I've experienced it already. I just work this way.

PLAYBOY: Does that block out fear?

CARREY: It just seems to program the computer. If it's God's will as well, then it'll happen and connect with my thought. I fit's not, it won't.

PLAYBOY: What goals are you programming now?

CARREY: I have four more things in my wallet right now.

PLAYBOY: What are they?

CARREY: I can't tell you.

PLAYBOY: Come on, give us one.

CARREY: No. That's between me and God.

PLAYBOY: Are they professional or personal?

CARREY: They're career things, they're life things, they're spiritual things—they're everything.

PLAYBOY: You're not gearing for a run for governor of California, are you?

CARREY: Let's hope not. No, everybody would be in a lot of trouble if I did, I may do it in the movies, just so I can say what

I need to say

PLAYBOY: You come from Canada but have talked about becoming a dual citizen so you can vote

CARREY: I'm in the process.

PLAYBOY: Would you have voted for Arnold Schwarzenegger?

CARREY: I like Arnold. I have no idea how qualified he is. The whole power of celebrity in this country scares me, the idea that we trust this guy and feel we know him because he's in a movie. If he mentions his frigging movies one more time in one of his speeches, I'm going to vomit. Dude, you're a politician now—speak about the issues. There is something dark and evil going on in the Republican Party that's just too frightening to get into.

PLAYBOY: Care to elaborate?

CARREY: I love this country. I came here from Canada with huge dreams, and America gave me everything I ever imagined and more. But I think we're in a lot of trouble. There's a lot of stuff that's going to hurt us. We might wake up one day and go, "Wait, we're the bad guy?" We've got to be careful.

PLAYBOY: You mean the invasion of Iraq?

CARREY: I mean everything. Our business overseas. How we treat each other. Insensitivity to people, to other races and countries. God knows I feel for our soldiers. It breaks my heart that people are dying, and I appreciate that they protect us. But I wonder how far that \$87 billion might have gone in showing goodwill to the rest of the world had we taken it and said, "How can we help you?" We might have won the hearts and minds of the Arab people.

I just hope Bush and those behind him have their hearts in the right place. We're there now. We have to see it through. If their hearts aren't in the right place and this is about oil, there's no bunker thick enough or deep enough to get away from God's bunker buster. I also believe we should stop writing cute messages on bombs. It isn't funny—it's cruel, and it doesn't do the soldiers any good. If we're going to write anything on a bomb, it should be "God bless whoever this lands on and may God forgive us all, on both sides."

PLAYBOY: Let's change the subject. When you started out as a stand-up comic, what was your goal?

CARREY: When I started I wanted to please my mom and dad.

PLAYBOY: Yet you abruptly scrapped your mainstream act as an impressionist and replaced it with something much edgier and more unpredictable.

CARREY: Oh, I'd have a war with the audience some nights. I'd go to war.

PLAYBOY: Why?

CARREY: I just felt like it was my mood at the time and it was dishonest to give them anything else. So I would go to the Comedy Store and pull the guns out and start firing.

PLAYBOY: Did you have a plan when you took the stage?

CARREY: Sometimes I had no plan at all. I went up six months in a row and told myself that I wouldn't repeat a word I'd said the night before. Every night was like death. I was bleeding with sweat before I'd go onstage, because I wouldn't allow myself to

repeat a joke or a line. I went up there with nothing.

PLAYBOY: What was the reaction?

CARREY: The comics thought it was incredible. They were all lined up at the back of the room going, "Do you know what he's doing?" Kinison would say, "You're not going to save any of that shit, man? That was funny shit." And I'd go, "Nope. Not gonna do it." It was brutal, and two thirds of the time it was absolute shit. I got chairs thrown at me, and I got in fights.

PLAYBOY: You had the added pressure of supporting your parents and siblings. That must have been tough.

CARREY: Well, yeah. It was hard when I threw my impression act out completely.

PLAYBOY: Why do it then?

CARREY: Because when you juggle for five minutes, they call you a juggler. That's it. Now, since I've developed other things, I can bring an impression back—in Bruce Almighty I do Clint Eastwood. It's fun, but it's not who I am.

PLAYBOY: Who guided you when you made that transition?

CARREY: My dad was really instrumental in the creative decisions I made. He was a jazzman, an orchestra leader.

PLAYBOY: Your father was also an accountant who lost his job. Did that show you the downside of playing it safe?

CARREY: For him it was a combination of fear and responsibility. He was a very, very good man. But I used to think my dad was a coward.

PLAYBOY: Why?

CARREY: Because he was such a nice guy to everybody, and he got run over in life. He got fired when he was 50, and no one wanted him anymore. He was always the guy who would give you the shirt off his back, and I used to look at that and go, "That's not honest. It's not entirely honest to be the nice guy all the time."

PLAYBOY: Did you ever say that to him?

CARREY: Not really, no. It was who he was. He loved people and showed me nothing but love, and I could never look at that in a bad way. But

you learn from your parents. What I learned was not just to give everybody everything they want. They don't know what they want. And they'll eat you up and spit you out without even meaning to.

PLAYBOY: What's the alternative?

CARREY: If I got into a place where I felt pigeonholed, I would do the opposite until everyone forgot what I used to do. That came from seeing how it turns out when you pander to people. You're asking to be kicked in the teeth.

PLAYBOY: You first made good money doing impressions as Rodney Dangerfield's opening act. Audiences liked you.

CARREY: I saw where it was going. I saw it leading to Vegas and opening for people. Or if you're Rich Little, you become the Impressionist Guy. God bless him, but it was not good for me. This soul is too big to be housed by that.

PLAYBOY: Dangerfield took you under his wing. What did you learn from him?

CARREY: More than anything, he supported my creative whims. When I stopped doing impressions and started spiking my hair



and doing weird things, he still hired me. He'd stand off to the side and laugh, and when I came off he'd say, "Man, those people think you're from another fucking planet." He's an incredible character. And he treated my father like gold, which was very important to me.

PLAYBOY: You've drawn clear lines about not discussing whom you date. Did you get burned?

CARREY: You do learn that if you're telling the truth it's going to piss somebody off. But the press knows. They know that the celebrities who stand in front of the paparazzi are, you know, half going, "Just be cool. It's okay. This serves a purpose. It gets the publicity out," and half going, "These are the fucking people who follow me around! What am I doing?"

PLAYBOY: The attention defines some entertainers.

CARREY: Yeah, there definitely are people out there who would do anything to get some publicity. I'm not qualified to speak for everybody. I'm kind of in rarified air. The main thing is, I just don't believe in meanness.

PLAYBOY: Comedy is sometimes mean.

CARREY: Sometimes I trip into it as a comic, but I have trouble reconciling that, too. Try to find a comic who isn't angry when he's 70. Why is George Carlin pissed off? He's brilliant. But the man is so angry it's getting unnerving. It's like he practically doesn't want to live on this planet anymore. I try to understand why that's happening, because I don't want that. I want to be a loving human being. I want to look at the world with joy and gratitude and see the things that are good about life.

PLAYBOY: Your newest movie is *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, which is about a couple who have their relationship erased from their brains. Why did you do it?

CARREY: What drew me is the idea that everybody has someone they'd rather erase: "Gosh, if I could just suck that out of my brain and my heart and never deal with it again, it'd be fantastic." Everybody identifies with that, has some relationship that hurts so bad that they just wish they could make the ghosts go away. You can't, of course.

PLAYBOY: The hardships you and your family endured after your father lost his job have been well chronicled. Would you erase that pain?

CARREY: Well, there was only one time when I felt something really horrible was going on. That was when we were all doing the job at Titan Wheels [a tire manufacturer]. The whole family was working. My dad was doing the night shift, and I was doing afternoons and going to school in the daytime. I saw it changing us, making us hateful and bigoted. I empathize with kids who go to school and can't understand or don't want to understand what the teacher is saying. I was so angry then, I just wanted to bash someone's head in.

PLAYBOY: Seriously?

CARREY: Yeah. I used to carry a bat on my cleaning cart. This factory was half Jamaican and half Indian—you know, Sikhs. Everybody had daggers and knives, and it was like a race war going on. I was in the middle of it.

PLAYBOY: What did they do to make you so angry?

CARREY: They'd taunt me. They'd pile their chicken bones two feet high in the corner of the cafeteria because they knew I'd have

to clean it up. Or they'd take a shit in the sink. Constantly trying to push my buttons to the point where I walked around with a cleaning cart and a baseball bat, just waiting for my opportunity to crack a skull. It was bad. I wanted to hurt somebody. I was caught up in anger. So I get how that feels. I understand.

PLAYBOY: Would you be who you are now without those experiences?

CARREY: It definitely gave me an edge. And I don't think anybody is interesting on-screen unless they have an edge of some kind. There's a reason Russell Crowe is popular, besides being an excellent actor. The guy is an edgy dude. And all of us kind of live vicariously through guys who can bust some heads for us. I think an edge is interesting to watch. To have that, you've got to risk.

PLAYBOY: In *Living Color* gave you your start, but it wasn't *Saturday Night Live*. Would you rather have done *SNL*?

CARREY: I never made it in the normal way everybody makes it. I tried out for *Saturday Night Live*. The day I auditioned I went over to NBC, and as I'm getting ready I'm going, "Am I meant to do this?" I got out of my car, and an NBC page was standing on the ledge on the 10th floor of the NBC building, trying to work up the nerve to kill himself. And I just went, "This isn't going to happen. This is not going to happen today." Because I read the universe all the time and generally get my answers real quick.

PLAYBOY: That could be taken as some kind of sign.

CARREY: Yeah, and all these news crews were coming out of the building. And this guy was shuffling toward the edge, trying to decide whether to kill himself or not.

PLAYBOY: Did he?

CARREY: I don't know. I never heard I went in. So the whole time I was in there I was thinking, Is he dead? Did he die? But I never watched the news. I forgot about it. That's how desensitized I was. It was all about whether I was getting on the show or not.

PLAYBOY: On *In Living Color* you were known as the white

guy. Did you have any idea who'd be the biggest success? Surely it wasn't going to be the Fly Girl named Jennifer Lopez.

CARREY: God bless her, man. She went for it. That's a driven woman. Unbelievable how well she has done. Incredible. But she's paying for it big-time, too. I didn't really have any notions about it, honestly. Sometimes I'd talk with Damon Wayans, who by year three had started getting opportunities and was on the way out of the show. He was tired a lot of the time, and I'd say to him, "But this is it, man! We made it already." I was aware that this was a rung on the ladder, but I wanted to enjoy it. What if it wasn't? What if this was as high as I was going? So I worked it to the very last show. Probably a little desperately.

PLAYBOY: You've convincingly beaten the crap out of yourself in *Liar Liar* and *Me, Myself & Irene*. Does it hurt?

CARREY: I hurt myself on *Me, Myself & Irene*. I'd sprained my ankle during rehearsals in the scene where Renee kicks me in the mouth and sends me over the fence. So for the rest of the film, when I'm running after the car, jumping on the car and doing all this stuff—it's all with a sprained ankle. I still have scarring on my bones. I don't generally hurt myself that much, but there were a lot of bumps and bruises on that movie.

And I was in hell in that Grinch costume, too. It was like knives were stuck in my eyes.

PLAYBOY: Because of the thick, colored contact lenses?

CARREY: Yes. It was just the worst situation comfort-wise you could possibly imagine. But still, when they said "Action!" I was free, you know? There's something about that suspended life moment. When they say "Action!" I'm free

PLAYBOY: You grew up loving Jimmy Stewart and played a role he would have taken in *The Majestic*. It didn't do well.

CARREY: It was a beautiful movie. I think what it missed was some humor. If you're going to do a hats-off to Frank Capra you've got to have the part when the gymnasium floor opens up and everybody falls in the pool and he's stepping on her robe and she's naked, jumping behind a bush. This film took itself a little too seriously. Too sentimental. It's odd when people go, "Well, how do you feel that this failed?" I never see it as failure. How can it be? This was 500 people working for four months. We turned on a town and gave them significance. I learned to be a better actor and met Martin Landau. Andy Kaufman? A frigging triumph! I don't think it was meant to do a lot of business, because Andy didn't do a lot of business. We were true to him and polarized the same people

PLAYBOY: What about *The Cable Guy*?

CARREY: Huge success! It has become this weird cult movie. So much focus was put on the money I made, and people came gunning for it. It's not Shakespeare, but there's some funny shit in that movie, man. It was dark. The mistake the movie company made was to tell people it wasn't dark. The audience got surprised. It's a dark, psychological, in-your-face comedy. I felt I'd done something fairly brave and that we had huge laughs doing it.

PLAYBOY: You aren't big on sequels. Did it bother you when New Line cast a look-alike for Dumb and Dumberer, a widely panned *Dumb and Dumber* prequel?

CARREY: Yes, it did. It was an odd kind of compliment and an odd, creepy thing to do, to dress somebody up and try to pass him off as me. That shouldn't happen until you're dead, right? I felt for that guy. He did a good impression.

PLAYBOY: Would you coax your 16-year-old daughter to go into show business?

CARREY: No one coaxed would ever fucking make it. If she has a burning desire beyond belief to make it in this business, she'll do it. No one can make it otherwise. No way. There are too many fucking humiliating things. She's going to be accused of nepotism. But she has talent, and that will prove her or not prove her. She's really a smart girl with a beautiful voice. She'll make it if she commits

PLAYBOY: Having been forced to leave school for financial reasons, are you a stickler about her getting a degree?

CARREY: I want her to. I feel there's some kind of solace that comes with finishing things. I don't think about it so much anymore. I left halfway through 10th grade, but I read and I have a hunger for information and knowledge. Psychology has always fascinated me. One reason I love acting is that you always have to figure out where a character came from, what his parents did to him, what happened here. It's like being a psychologist of some sort

PLAYBOY: You've been married twice, now you live alone. Do you miss having somebody around?

CARREY: It's less about that than about wanting to be real with somebody. I want to love somebody without walking around in a secret turmoil and feeling like I've been made to be something I'm not. Somebody I can be nakedly honest with—that's who is going to win my love

PLAYBOY: Given your current level of fame, how do you date a woman and know if she's responding to you and not to your stardom?

CARREY: Sooner or later the monster shows its face

PLAYBOY: How do you know?

CARREY: I think we're all innately psychic. We're like dogs, man. We smell it. Sometimes we deny it, but we know it. We know when somebody loves us because they love us. I'm pretty sharp.

PLAYBOY: Do you still go into relationships with an open mind, or are you cynical?

CARREY: The scariest thing for me is to change my mind and possibly hurt somebody. I don't think about being hurt as much as I think about possibly waking up one day and wanting something else and hurting that person. That's the fear, I guess. I want to have a lifelong love; I just don't know if that's real anymore

PLAYBOY: Maybe you'd be a better husband now because you are less needy.

CARREY: I wasn't needy. I was perhaps not as tolerant as I could be. Perhaps I just picked people who were not good candidates to begin with, who weren't necessarily a good match

PLAYBOY: Given your spirituality and your desire for dramatic roles, are you still a comic at heart?

CARREY: It is difficult because I've trained myself to be this comedic mind. That entails looking at something and deciding what's funny about it. What's funny about anything is what's wrong with it. So you're judging what's wrong with something or someone all the time, every day of your life. Down the line, that's got to take a toll. You can't end up being a happy guy if you spend every minute of your life going, "President Bush—what a fucker!" You may think that from time to time—and I certainly do—but I also don't believe that he necessarily thinks he's doing something wrong. Some people can look at life and go, "That's the beautiful thing, that's the beautiful thing. Hey, there's a beautiful thing." And that's where I'm trying to put myself.



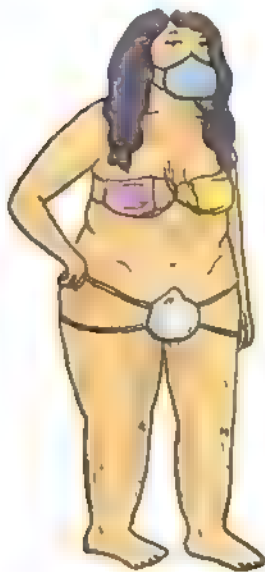
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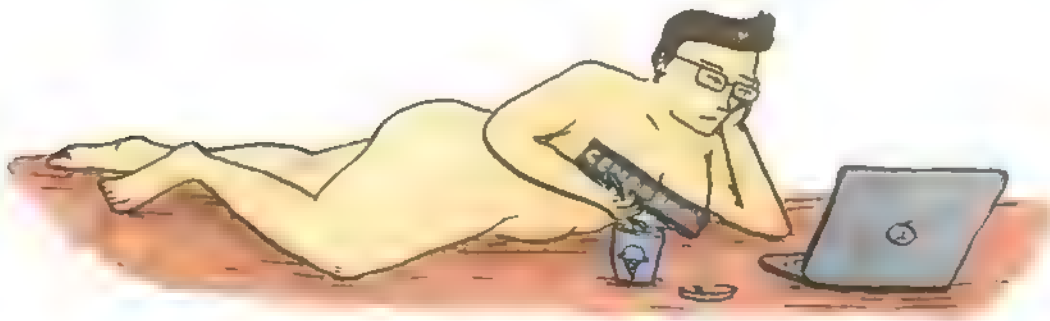
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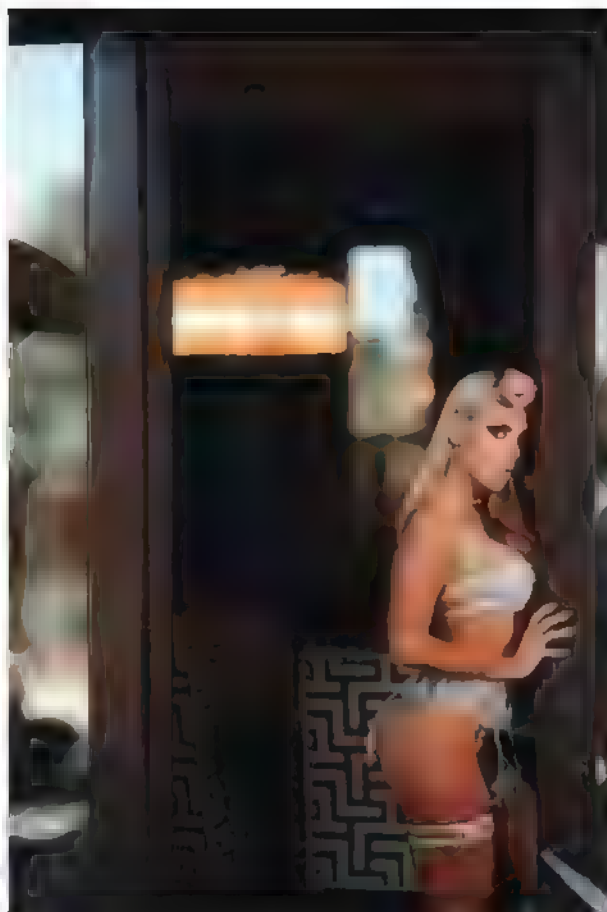
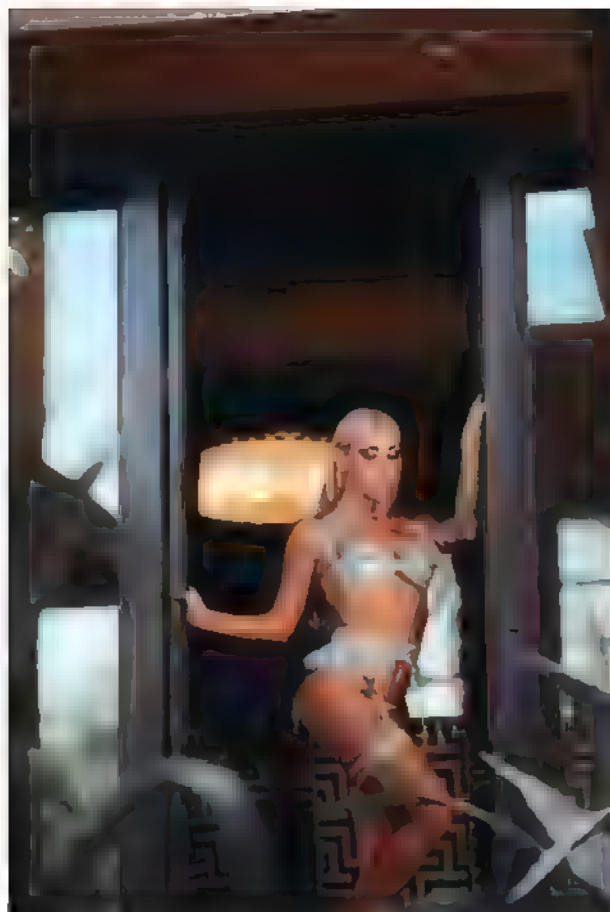
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MUA Annetta McBain | @annettamcbain
Location Tomiyasu Villa Las Vegas NV | @tomiyasuvilla
Skincare Ageless Zen | @agelesszen









How do you like to begin your day? I usually begin my day by taking good care of myself. Which includes a healthy breakfast and exercise.

How did you get started in the modeling industry? What inspired you to become a model? I started when I was 14 years old. Did some photoshoots in Brazil and Italy which included 2 magazine covers. But I always looked up to other professionals in the industry as inspiration like Adriana Lima and Alessandra Ambrosio.

Best place you have ever been to in the world? Paris!

What are some of your biggest dreams you hope to achieve? Abundance of love, success, and money! We become what we believe.

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? Freedom of Self-expression is one of my core beliefs. I am known to be a joie de vivre person so I am not a fan of convention or rules in general... That way of life extends itself to pretty much everything I do.

How do you prepare physically and mentally for a photo shoot that will be seen by so many people? I am committed to a general physical wellness regimen and of course, always have my glam team getting me ready for important shoots. In general, I like to stay on top of my game so no last-minute prep.

What are your favorite aspects of modeling, and what challenges have you encountered along the way? I love the camera! The biggest challenge is definitely developing

a thick skin. This industry is all about appearance and there'll be a million jobs you're not right for.

Who are some of the models or influencers that you admire and draw inspiration from in your career? Not necessarily one person, but I am inspired by models who have good work ethics and are involved in great causes! Also, models who promote body positivity in their work.

What's one thing about yourself that your fans might be surprised to learn? I can bake! Love making some yummy desserts. Also, I am a big-time supporter of rescuing abused and abandoned animals.

3 things that you can't go a day without. Protein, exercise, and good sleep.

If you could choose one word to describe your journey as a model so far, what would it be, and why? Hustle! I am always trying to achieve my goals and advance in my career.

What do you believe sets you apart from other models in the industry? What sets me apart is my hot heritage mix of both Brazil and Italy. My mom is full-blown Brazilian and my dad likewise is 100% Southern Italian. That makes for quite the chemistry. I am also a DJ playing some of Vegas's hottest clubs and parties.

Can you share any exciting upcoming projects or collaborations you're involved in? Yes! I have a skincare line project I am very excited about. It is called Ageless Zen. They have developed a range of natural products based



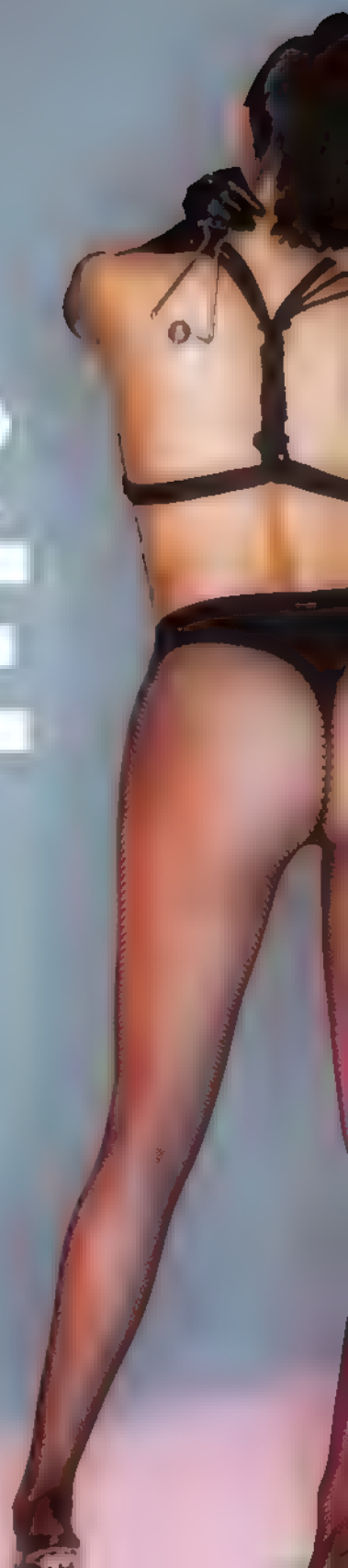
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Give Me MORE

WRITTEN BY
ANITA LITTLE

PHOTOS BY
CHARLOTTE RUTHERFORD





The democratization of consent. The freedom to communicate what you want to do or what you want done to you. The art of lying back, letting go and edging closer to getting off. Do you feel that? Do you want more? Feel it tingle, taunt, touch and take you into another universe.

Pulling back the curtain on the beauties of BDSM

This euphoria is deeply interwoven in the acts of BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism), the craft of making sex as compassionate and consensual as it is captivating. If we want to become a truly sex-positive society, we need to engage

with one of the few sexual subcultures that take sex positivity seriously

"We—especially men—have been socially conditioned to avoid pain and submission," explains Domina Colette Pervette, a San Francisco-based dominatrix. "But the lines between pain and pleasure begin to blur in the state of heightened arousal."

The conflation of BDSM with perversion remains the biggest misconception the practice faces. Strange, given that one must be an excellent communication to partake in kink, if you can't talk about it, you aren't ready to be blindfolded, whipped, chained or cuffed. "There are no assumptions in BDSM. Everything has to be negotiated," says Pervette.

"The first hour is all about communication," says Argent Lloyd of his practice of shibari, the art of Japanese rope bondage. "I want to share this space with you, and you're giving me permission to put my hands on you."

Despite the BDSM community's history of promoting respect between partners, practitioners have often been thrown into the same bucket as predators. Until 2013, the practice of BDSM was classified as a disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—alongside pedophilia and bestiality.

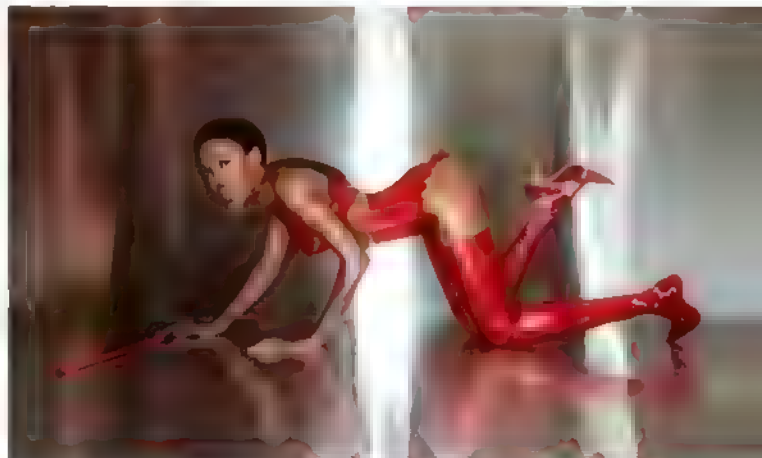
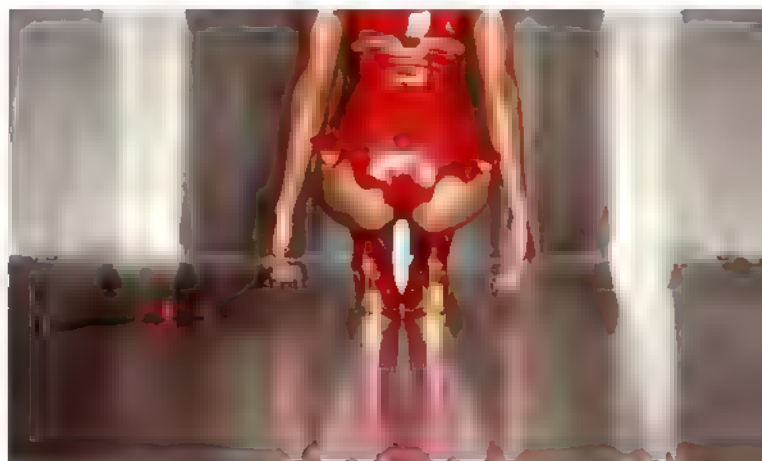
Susan Wright, founder of the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, works to change how the mental health community understands kink. "So much of what we focus on is educating professionals. They are the gatekeepers," she says. According to Wright, in 2008, 124 parents approached the organization because their BDSM preferences were being used against them in family court. After the

NCSF successfully campaigned for clinicians to update the DSM, that number had dropped to 20 parents by 2018.

What's more backward about kink-shaming is how much the vanilla could learn from the kinky. Lucky for us, appreciators of kink are coming out of the closet. This includes celebrity ambassadors: Adam Rippon wore a leather harness to the 2018 Academy Awards, Michael B. Jordan and Timothée Chalamet followed. This isn't an F.L. James fantasy; this is reality. And our world needs it. "People often forget that BDSM is just another way of connecting with someone," says Pervette. "How we as a culture accept BDSM is indicative of how open we are to the expression of sexual freedom overall."



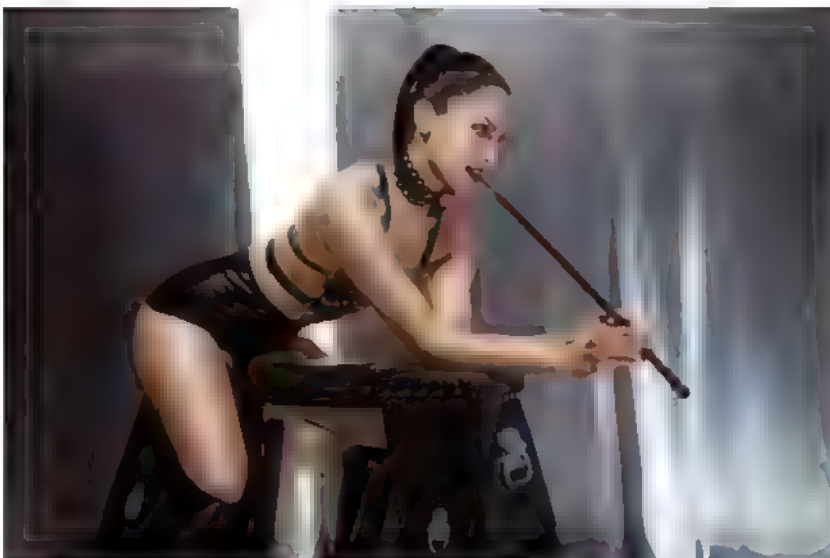
March 2019 Playmate Mik Hamano



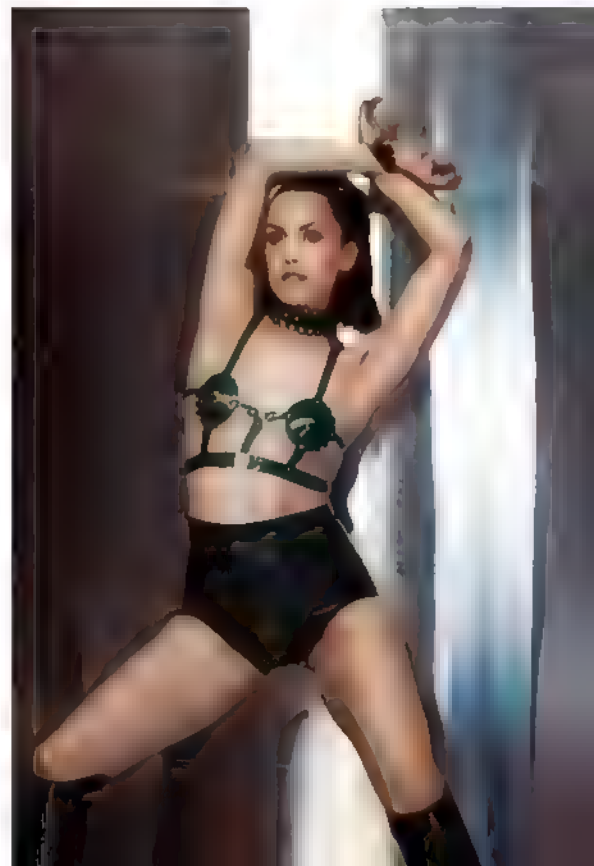
September 2018 Playmate Kirby Griffin



February 2016 Playmate Kristy Garrett



2013 Playmate of the Year and April 2012 Playmate Raquel Pomplun



Woman on *Top*

Celebrating Lainie
Kazan and Her Playboy
Club Showrooms

The extraordinary entertainer's career has included everything from a legendary pictorial to movie stardom—with eponymous Playboy nightclub nooks (and *more* looking) along the way

BY PATTY FARMER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE PLAYBOY ARCHIVES



Lainie Kazan might be described as not one but two of the most singular figures in American pop culture. Since the 1980s she has made a specialty of playing zany, eccentric, older female relatives; you know her face, whether you've seen her in *Desperate Housewives*, *Fuller House*, *The Nanny* or *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. But the Kazan of the 1960s and 1970s was a buxom singing sexpot with erotic energy and musical chops in equal proportion. In addition to inspiring comic-book creator Jack Kirby's Big Barda of the DC Comics *New Gods* franchise, Kazan played a key role in the evolution of the Playboy empire. She was one of the most important celebrities of her time to pose for the magazine, and she played a pivotal role in the last great years of the first-generation Playboy Clubs.

Lainie Levine was born in Brooklyn in 1940 and later took her mother's maiden name, Kazan. Her father was a book-maker on the fringes of respectability.

"I grew up around that whole thing," she says, meaning illegal gambling and organized crime, "so I didn't really think about it." Both her parents were Jewish but of different strains, endowing their daughter with a combination of Eastern European and Mediterranean DNA. This empowered her to play a wide range of characters and undoubtedly proved to be a factor in the first roles she landed on Broadway. *The Happiest Girl in the World* (1961) and *Bravo Giovanni* (1962)—based on Greek and Italian culture, respectively.

Kazan was singing at a small New York club called the Living Room when the producers of *Funny Girl*, the Broadway smash starring Barbra Streisand, came in one night. Floored by her passionate delivery—a PLAYBOY writer later said that "Lainie tackles every song as if it might be her last"—they hired her as the lead understudy, as well as one of the show's "Ziegfeld girls." To Kazan's dismay, Streisand almost never missed a performance, although when the star

Lainie's Room was so successful that the home office asked her to open a second location.

happened to fall ill one matinee day in 1965, Kazan ably took on the leading role twice within several hours. It was precisely because it happened so rarely that when Kazan did go on, she attracted attention. When, that November, she appeared on a special Broadway-themed episode of the massively popular television show *Bell Telephone Hour*, she became the most famous understudy in the country.

Kazan flourished in the late 1960s, making four albums for MGM Records and appearing in top clubs all over the country. She broke into movies and became a frequent guest on the major variety shows, including *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Dean Martin Show*. This period hit its peak when Kazan posed nude in the October 1970 PLAYBOY. Months earlier she had been filming her third movie, *Romance of a Horsethief*, in Yugoslavia, where she met photographer Lawrence Schiller. He suggested she pose for the magazine. "He cajoled me and told me I wouldn't be totally nude—and I wasn't," Kazan says. "They were very Rubenesque pictures, very beautiful."

After that high point, Kazan's career stumbled. She broke her foot while filming a TV special, a stroke of bad luck that put her out of work for several seasons. The entertainment business was changing. Gradually, the old-school supper clubs went out of business, the TV variety shows went off the air and the big record companies shifted to new types of music. For a few years Kazan sustained herself and her daughter by working in low-rent clubs she calls "the toilets of America." When a few of the seedier club owners refused to pay her, she had to rely on tough-talking friends to make sure they honored their contractual obligations.

The Playboy clubs, having had a strong start in the early 1960s, were going through a similar period of change as business fell off. Magazine sales reached an all-time high in the early 1970s, but the clubs were losing their edge; there was less incentive to be served by waitresses in Bunny costumes when women were wearing considerably less on discotheque dance floors. Hugh Hefner tried to expand the clubs by opening family-oriented resorts, but this proved a costly misfire.

A moment of serendipity arrived in the mid-1970s. "I was working at one place in Milwaukee that was just ghastly, and all the checks they gave me were bouncing," Kazan recalls. "I was staying



An outtake from PLAYBOY's October 1970 feature on Kazan, entitled simply Lainie. "There have been many Jewish sex symbols," she told the magazine. (Photo by Larry Schiller)

at this beaten-down hotel, in a room with a cockeyed floor." She remembered a friend, Sam Distefano, who was running the Playboy resort in nearby Lake Geneva, where she had sung a few years earlier. "I called Sam and said, 'I would really appreciate it if I could just come up for a weekend and lie down in a real bed.' And he said, 'Of course! C'mon up.'"

The resort itself was as beautiful as she remembered—"I thought I'd died and gone to heaven"—but she was shocked by the music she heard in the big showroom: a low-rent rock band called Three Shaggy Gorillas Minus One Buffalo Fish. Barely 10 people made up the audience. Mustering her courage, Kazan took her concerns to Distefano: Playboy had once been synonymous with the best in jazz. What had gone wrong? Distefano passed her remarks up the corporate chain of command to Playboy HQ in Chicago until they reached the desk of Hefner himself.

Hef proposed a meeting. Kazan thought it over: "What can I lose? I'll go and talk to them. I didn't have a car. I didn't have any clothes. I had only jeans and a T-shirt with me, and so that's how I went down. And they rented me a van."

In the spring of 1976, she drove to Chicago with

her daughter and met with Hefner and Victor Lownes, his partner in the clubs. As Kazan recalls, Hef said to her, "I hear you have a really good idea."

"Actually, I didn't have an idea," she says about her bluff. "I just repeated my observations I had mentioned to Sam. But he quickly said, 'Great, I'm leaving you with Vic. You two work it out.'"

What emerged from those talks was an innovation for the Playboy Club chain: Lainie's Room, an entertainment showroom programmed by the songstress herself, would open inside the Los Angeles Playboy Club. Taking its name from a phone call Lownes made to Kazan at her hotel—she answered by saying, "Hello, Lainie's room"—it officially opened to terrific fanfare in September 1976.

Kazan had overseen virtually every detail. "I changed the menu. I redecorated the whole place. I laid out linen napkins and tablecloths. Put roses on the table," she says. "I made it classy." Naturally she was also the first headliner, but she also



"My biggest self-criticism," Kazan told PLAYBOY, "has been that I try to be everything." Kazan certainly did almost everything during her time with the L.A. Playboy Club, from performing to opening and running her own showcase club room. (Photo by Larry Schiller)



Lainie Kazan performing in 1977 at the inaugural Lainie's Room inside the Los Angeles Playboy Club. (Photo by Vernon Smith)

booked the other talent—singers, bands and comedians. The room was new and fresh and attracted lots of media attention; its success was a shot in the arm for both Kazan and the clubs.

The new gig came with challenges—unpredictability goes hand in hand with booking live acts. Kazan recalls that one night Morgana King, who played Marlon Brando's wife in *The Godfather*, simply decided she didn't feel like singing. And when songstress Barbara McNair's husband was murdered in December 1976, she understandably canceled her sets. In both cases, Kazan dropped her own plans in order to take the stage in their stead. Her devotion paid off. Lainie's Room was so successful that about a year after it opened, the home office asked her to open a second location. Situated on the fifth floor of the New York Playboy Club, it launched in February 1978. Both sites operated as clubs-within-clubs; visitors could access Lainie's Rooms without having to buy a Playboy Club membership—a point Kazan insisted on, and Hef finally acquiesced to.

Perhaps the biggest star to rise from Lainie's Rooms was

"Bob Dylan was a standard in the room. He was like a piece of furniture."

one of Kazan's own musicians: pianist David Benoit. Kazan and her backing band were due to play a gig with the Duke Ellington Orchestra when her regular pianist simply disappeared—lost, she speculates, into his drug addiction. She desperately needed a replacement on keys. Someone recommended Benoit, a name that was new to her. He had played only in instrumental jazz and rock bands and had absolutely no experience accompanying singers, but Kazan took a risk and hired him.

"She really taught me," Benoit tells *Playboy*. "It was a lesson in how to accompany a singer." He did so well that in 1977 Kazan recorded a new album, her first in a decade, *The Chanteuse Is Loose*, live at the L.A. club with Benoit on piano. Benoit eventually became Kazan's full-fledged musical director; years later, he would become a Grammy-nominated contemporary jazz superstar.

Stars often entered Kazan's orbit. One night Benoit was in her dressing room, picking up his notes, which Kazan issued after each show, and heard a knock on the door. "I said, 'Who is it?'" Benoit remembers. "'It's Bob Dylan.' I'm like, 'No, no, c'mon. Who is it really?'" He says, "Bob Dylan!" I opened the door, and there was Bob Dylan, right in front of me."

Indeed, Dylan and Kazan dated for much of the time she was running the two *Lainie's Rooms*. "Bob Dylan was a standard in the room. He was like a piece of furniture. He would come in at least once a week," says Jessie Rich Williams, Kazan's stalwart background singer. "He would come in incognito with a hat pulled down over his head and sit back in Lainie's booth," Dylan, who occasionally brought in his friend Joni Mitchell, was the only one with the chutzpah to give Hefner the cold shoulder in his own club.

Kazan was no stranger to high-profile romantic partners. She is perhaps the only woman in the world to have enjoyed intimate relationships with both Frank Sinatra and Dylan; in a 1979 *PLAYBOY*

story she characterizes herself as something of a short-term serial monogamist: "I'm a one-man woman, even if it's only for a week."

The *Lainie's Rooms* gave Kazan a career boost that restored much of her stature in the entertainment industry. Offers started coming in from Hollywood. In 1981, Kazan said yes to Francis Ford Coppola, a friend from her Hofstra University days. But the movie they made, *One From the Heart*, was an epic flop. "A fiasco," she says. "A big, big, nasty failure—but the greatest experience." Despite the poor box office, Kazan's film career was officially resuscitated.

In 1982 she appeared in *My Favorite Year*, delivering a performance that turned her into everybody's favorite older female relative (and led to plenty of future roles in that vein). The film was so widely loved that 10 years later it was adapted into a Broadway musical, in which Kazan revived her original role and earned a Tony nomination.



Nia Vardalos (left) and Lainie Kazan in the 2002 indie romance hit *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. (Photo by Sophie Giraud/lfc/Kobal/Shutterstock)

As Kazan's acting work picked up, she stepped away from the clubs. She had sold the use of her name to *Playboy Enterprises*, but the *Lainie's Rooms* just didn't work without Lainie. By the mid-1980s the rooms—along with most of the *Playboy Clubs*—were history.

Kazan, now 80 years old, looks fondly upon her *Playboy* years. She was treated as a full-fledged executive by the corporation, masterminding her venues, participating in corporate meetings and much in between. "I would make my points and they would take them in with some seriousness," she says. "It was always a battle, but they would eventually do what I suggested."

It all goes back to her beginnings—to her childhood in Brooklyn and the nascent grit that would bring her such durable and varied success. "I have negotiated with the most intelligent people and the high intellectuals, and I also negotiated with mobsters and with the lowest of the low," she says. "I learned how to be, and I learned how not to be. It was the great lesson of my life."



Lainie Kazan (left) with famed performer Eartha Kitt and congo-drum player Marcelino Valdez at the 1978 opening of the New York *Lainie's Room*. (Photo by Vernon Smith)

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